DAILY NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

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How Nicole Kidman reinvented herself at 59

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A-level results and tables

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Burnham 'bypassing' villagers opposed to new asylum sites

Steven Swinford Political Editor
Constance Kampfner
Political Correspondent

Labour has been accused of "bypassing" local communities as it seeks to house thousands of asylum seekers on disused military sites, while the police are warning of unrest.

The government announced in June that it planned to convert three former bases — Bicester in Oxfordshire, RAF Barnham in Suffolk and RAF Linton-on-Ouse in North Yorkshire — to house 3,750 asylum seekers. All are near small villages and asylum seekers will far outnumber the local people.

This week Andy Burnham defended the plans, saying that people in more affluent areas must "play their part" in housing asylum seekers. The government is using an "urgent" planning process for two of the sites — Bicester and Barnham — under which the Home Office has submitted the applications directly to Angela Rayner, the housing secretary, rather than to the local planning authorities.

The approach is being used because the sites are deemed to be in the national interest, but Labour, Liberal Democrat and Tory MPs whose constituencies are near the bases are concerned that it is undemocratic.

The applications will not involve a formal public consultation but are instead expected to use a "community engagement plan" to inform local areas about the decision and take feedback.

Only the main statutory bodies, including National Highways, Natural England, local highway authorities and the local planning authority, will be formally consulted.

The Home Office said the approach would ensure the public could submit their views so it could "understand the impact of large sites on communities".

Police chiefs in Norfolk, Suffolk and

Continued on page 2

Houses burn and train derails on hottest day

● Wildfires destroy homes in West Midlands ● Two seriously hurt in rail accident near Lewes

Laurence Sleator
Transport Correspondent
Lowri Lewis, Mario Ledwith
Emma Yeomans, Charlie Parker Lewes

A child and several firefighters were taken to hospital yesterday as wildfires swept across Britain and burnt down houses on the hottest day of the year.

As the country sweltered, a train derailed near Lewes in East Sussex, leaving two passengers seriously injured in an accident that experts said may be linked to the heatwave.

The West Midlands was badly affected by the heat. A grass fire in Stourbridge set six properties alight and four homes burnt down in Stoke-on-Trent.

A child was taken to hospital after inhaling smoke and six other people were treated.

Simon Tuhill, the region's chief fire officer, said the wildfires across the West Midlands had been "one of the most significant" incidents his fire service had dealt with. He added that "the devastation is extensive". He said Andy Burnham had been updated on the wildfires.

Richard Parker, the region's mayor, told Sky News that Burnham had pledged to support fire and rescue services in the West Midlands with any additional resources they needed as they battled the blazes.

Fires that are being tackled by firefighters elsewhere in the country have been alight for almost a week.

People on board the derailed train just north of Lewes were thrown into the air as carriages toppled on to their sides after the Southern Rail service from London Victoria to Eastbourne came off the tracks shortly before 4pm.

James MacCleary, the Lewes MP, told Times Radio that concerns had been raised recently about the condition of track in the area due to the heat. Rail industry sources said images from the site of the crash suggested that parts of the track had buckled.

SKY NEWS; EDDIE MITCHELL FOR THE TIMES

Yesterday, a temperature of 38.1C was recorded at Kew Gardens in west London, making it officially the hottest day of the year.

British Transport Police declared a major incident after the derailment and began an operation to free passengers from the wreckage. All were evacuated. Twenty people were taken to hospital, two of whom suffered serious injuries. Nine others were less seriously hurt.

The eight-car service, which left London at 2.24pm, came off the tracks on a five-minute journey between

Continued on page 5

Six houses in Stourbridge were razed by flames as the country recorded a high of 38.1C. The heat may have buckled track that caused three carriages to derail near Lewes in East Sussex

Met chief and prosecutor clash over Levy failings

David Woode Crime Editor

A row has broken out between the country's leading prosecutor and its most senior police officer over failures in the criminal justice system that left the rapist Simon Levy free to kill.

Stephen Parkinson, the director of public prosecutions, accused Sir Mark Rowley, the Metropolitan Police commissioner, of "taking shots" at different parts of the system. The blame game began after Levy was jailed for life this week for killing two women and raping a third.

Parkinson said he was "deeply sorry" that Crown Prosecution Service lawyers had twice failed to tell a magistrates' court that Levy, a registered sex offender, was on bail for murder. Police had warned lawyers that Levy still posed a risk to women and said he showed a "total disregard for bail" by continuing to sexually assault women on the London Underground.

Yesterday Rowley said that the force had apologised for its failures in the case but called out leaders from multiple agencies for not taking responsibility for their shortcomings.

"I'm the leader stepping forward, there's no one from the courts service, no one from the CPS, no one from probation stepping forward," he told BBC Radio 4's *Today*.

Parkinson heeded the call hours later. He said: "The Metropolitan Police commissioner is absolutely right to recognise that there have been failures across the criminal justice system. We were responsible for some of those failures, and I'm deeply sorry.

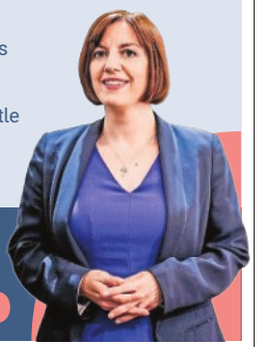
"But ... I don't think that different parts of the system should be taking shots at each other. I don't think that's good for public confidence."

Levy, who is partially blind, was given a whole-life order on Wednesday for the murders of Carmenza Valencia-Trujillo, 53, and Sheryl Wilkins, 39. He also received two concurrent life sentences for the violent rape of a third woman, who cannot be named for legal reasons.

News

Today's highlights

7am **Bridget Phillipson**, right, Labour Party chair and minister for women and equalities
7.45am **Kevin Hollinrake**, chair of the Conservative Party
12.30pm **Tim Bale**, professor of politics at Queen Mary University
2.05pm **Steve Bennett**, founder of the comedy review website Chortle
5pm **Douglas Carswell**, former MP for Clacton



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On the streets with the Taliban's 'virtue and vice' police

The Times special correspondent, Anthony Loyd, has been reporting from Afghanistan for 30 years. He has been back on the streets of Kabul, finding out what life is like for ordinary Afghans once more under Taliban rule

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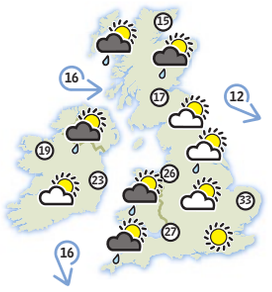

Hot, dry and sunny in the southeast but fresher with showers in the northwest. **Full forecast, page 56**

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Watchdog to interview Farage over £5m 'gift' after by-election

Steven Swinford Political Editor

Nigel Farage is likely to be interviewed by the parliamentary standards watchdog within weeks of his expected victory in the Clacton by-election.

The Reform leader resigned as an MP last month after mounting scrutiny over his finances, including a £5 million "gift" from a British-Thai cryptocurrency billionaire.

Farage was being investigated by Daniel Greenberg, the parliamentary standards commissioner, over whether he should have declared the gift as a benefit. If Greenberg finds against him he could face a formal inquiry by the standards committee and ultimately be suspended from parliament, potentially triggering another by-election.

The investigation was suspended after Farage's resignation but will resume if he becomes an MP again. Farage insists he has done nothing wrong and said he was resigning to "stick two fingers up to the establishment".

However, none of the main parties contested the seat, leaving Farage facing Count Binface, an independent candidate, as his main rival. The by-election was contested by 34 candidates after attracting a large number of independents.

Farage will use a speech after the result today to insist that "the establishment can't beat us". A Reform UK source said: "They can throw anything they want and the people of Clacton back us."

Farage received £5 million from Christopher Harborne, a cryptocurrency billionaire based in Thailand, in April 2024. He insisted that the gift was personal and his to spend as he saw fit.

He has given a series of explanations for the gift, including that it was for his security and also as a reward for Brexit.

Farage told LBC Radio that it was "not any of your business", adding: "With all due respect, what's it got to do with you? It's an unconditional gift. I can spend it on Ferraris if I want. That'd be entirely up to me. I can do what I want with it. I can put it on the horses."

The gift was referred to the commissioner as a potential breach of the MPs' code of conduct, which states that new MPs must declare any registrable benefits they received in the year before they were elected.

The rules say that "purely personal gifts or benefits" from family or commercial loans would not normally need to be registered. However, they also say that "both the possible motive of the giver and the use to which the gift is put" should be considered, adding: "If there is any doubt the gift should be registered."

He is also facing scrutiny over benefits in kind provided by George Cottrell, a close friend and convicted fraudster. The Sunday Times disclosed that the support included security and social media staff in the year before he was elected.

Reform UK spent £10,000 on Facebook and Instagram advertising during the Clacton campaign, according to Politico. Farage, the most-followed UK party leader on social media, has also shared election content across his TikTok and X accounts.

The contest is estimated to have cost taxpayers £250,000 and the 90cm-long ballot paper has caused problems for Tendring district council. The size of the paper meant larger tables than usual were required at the count and the result announced on the floor of Clacton Leisure Centre rather than on a stage due to the number of candidates who would have to fit on it.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Burnham 'bypassing' villagers

North Yorkshire have raised concerns about their ability to cope with potential protests caused by the sites.

The chief constables of Norfolk and Suffolk, Paul Sanford and Rachel Kearton, have written to the Home Office and local MPs warning that they may be unable to cope with the disorder prompted by the site at RAF Barnham.

They are particularly concerned because their forces use the site as a specialist operations training centre and have been told to leave within weeks.

They said: "We are increasingly concerned about the potential for heightened community tension and unrest arising from the proposed future use of RAF Barnham ... Without sufficient time to identify and establish a replacement facility, there is a clear risk that our ability to sustain the specialist capabilities necessary to respond to emerging tensions and public order challenges across both counties will be significantly diminished."

Sir Alec Shelbrooke, the Tory MP for Wetherby & Easingwold near RAF Linton-on-Ouse, said he had been told by the chief constable of North Yorkshire that they did not have the resources to deal with potential weekly protests. He said: "It is inappropriate to triple the adult population like this; it's not fair on people living here."

Rachael Maskell, the Labour MP for York Central, said: "It's really important that the communities are involved in the process and really listened to."

Terry Jermy, the Labour MP for South West Norfolk, said: "The risk ... is that we are quite rightly focusing on devolution and power to local communities and this process would seem to be the opposite to that. There's a contradiction in our approach."

Calum Miller, the Lib Dem MP for Bicester & Woodstock, said: "This is an affront to democracy. The government is deliberately bypassing the views of local representatives and people."

The government said: "All crown development planning applications require engagement with local authorities. We are ensuring members of the public will be able to submit their views."

Politics, pages 8-9
Burnham v Middle England is just the start, Patrick Maguire, page 23

Nick Timothy Comment

It seems to be a controversial thing to say, but it is true, so I will say it. The huge numbers of men crossing the Channel and being housed near small villages in rural areas are illegal immigrants. They broke into our country without permission, and they should be deported — not housed near quiet and peaceful villages in places like Suffolk.

This is not a matter of opinion or rhetoric. Section 24 of the Immigration Act 1971 makes it a criminal offence for a person who is not a British citizen to knowingly enter the country without leave to do so. Yet the state has given up on enforcing the law.

These illegal immigrants travel from France — a safe country — but started their journeys in some of the most violent and misogynistic places in the world. The government refuses to publish regular data on crimes broken down by nationality and immigration status, but few days pass without new cases of rapes and violent crimes committed by illegal immigrants who claim asylum.

Ministers claim they are winning because they are reducing the asylum casework backlog and closing down a handful of the "asylum hotels" used to house these illegal immigrants. But all they are doing is rushing claimants through the system.

They are emptying the hotels by moving the migrants into houses of multiple occupancy in residential areas and, now, turning former military bases into new towns for illegal immigrants.

RAF Barnham in Suffolk is just outside my constituency. It is used by the police as a training base. Out of nowhere, the government announced that it planned to house up to 1,250 male illegal immigrants there. (The village of Barnham, next door, has a population of 588.) There will be more than four times as many men housed there as local women.

Instead of going through the local planning system, the government is using an urgent crown development process to cut out local people having their say.

The police say leaving their base will undermine their operational effectiveness, and increase their workload. This is partly about protests, which turned violent in Thetford across the county border in Norfolk, but also spikes in crime — often serious offences — associated with an influx of illegal immigrants.

Already in Suffolk I have had contact from constituents concerned about the behaviour of illegal immigrants housed locally who behaved inappropriately to children in public places.

The police move them on, but there is little understanding of the standards of behaviour we expect here. Too often the priority for public authorities is to limit the information made available to the public, and resist the use of accurate terminology such as "illegal immigrants", instead of telling local people the truth.

The prime minister says his approach to housing illegal immigrants is about "fairness", and he asks all parts of the country to "play their part". But there is nothing "fair" in allowing men who have broken into our country to stay here, housed for free, and given access to services often denied to local people. The national effort should be to stop illegal immigration altogether — not house people we do not want in quiet and peaceful communities like ours.

Nick Timothy is Conservative MP for West Suffolk and shadow justice secretary

Sun, sea and squealing as boars go wild on beaches of French Riviera

A growing and fearless population is hogging the sands hungry for holidaymakers' snacks, reports **Adam Sage**

RAYMOND ROIG/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

A wild boar and her piglets hit the beach in Cerbère, near the border with Spain. Authorities are struggling to control the wild boar population across Europe

Holidaymakers on the French Riviera are having to share the sand with a new type of beachcomber: wild boars scavenging for food.

Sightings have become more frequent on the Côte d'Azur this summer, in the latest sign of the exponential growth in Europe's wild boar population. Locals say the animals have discovered that humans tend to visit beaches laden with snacks, which can make for tasty pickings when left unguarded.

Sometimes, beachgoers can be persuaded to part ways with their food voluntarily. Although it is an offence to feed wild boar, people do so anyway according to officials. Seaside bins are another rich source of nourishment for boars.

Coastal campsites, restaurants and holiday residences all say they are struggling to combat the invasion of the animals, which have become particularly skilled in knocking over wheelie bins in their hunt for food.

There have been no reports of accidents, with experts saying the animals are generally not aggressive. They have, however, been known to charge when wounded or fearful for their young.

"We're careful. We keep our eyes open," a French tourist sunbathing on a Riviera beach frequented by boars told the TF1 television channel. Another said that he was used to coming across boars in regional forests, but added: "It's very rare on beaches."

In May, a 45kg (7 stone) boar caused a commotion on Almanarre beach in Hyères when it swam in from the sea before careering across the sands, apparently panicked and looking for an escape. Boars are capable of swimming several kilometres, according to experts, and have colonised Mediterranean islands such as Porquerolles, Port-Cros and Levant in recent years. They are also capable of crossing to the mainland.

Like much of continental Europe, the Côte d'Azur appears powerless to halt the rise in the boar population. The resort of Fréjus, for instance, introduced a fine of up to €450 this year for anyone caught feeding boars, following complaints that flowerbeds, both in municipal parks and private gardens, were being decimated.

Farmers speak of woe on a far greater scale, with boars causing an estimated €90 million in damage to crops across the country per year, according to the French Federation of Hunters. The federation says it is doing its best to keep the population in check, culling 881,372 boars during the 2024-25 hunting season, double the number killed two decades ago and 20 times more than in the 1970s. But boars breed faster than the federation's members can shoot, according to officials.

Scientists say that one reason for the increase in boars is climate change, as warmer winters have meant greater numbers of young boars survive into the spring. But critics also blame the introduction of game management practices, designed to ensure a plentiful supply of boars for hunters in recent decades. The practices include putting down food for boars in forests and avoiding culls of young and female boars. The federation's detractors say the policy has allowed the population to grow out of control.

Elsewhere in Europe, the picture is similar. Boars have become a familiar sight on the Costa del Sol in Spain and also in the Italian capital Rome where 177 soldiers were deployed to shoot the animals in 2024.

In 2020, a German nudist was photographed chasing a boar that had taken a bag containing his laptop by a lake in Berlin. The boar dropped the bag when he clapped his hands and banged the ground with a stick, and he recovered his laptop.

Occultist damns druids as attention-seekers in cheap robes

David Barnett

There's trouble brewing on the myth-soaked isle of Anglesey.

Druids, who regularly use ancient monuments such as the Neolithic henge and the burial mound Bryn Celli Ddu, have been condemned by the owner of an occult store on Anglesey, Ynys Mon in the Welsh language, for disrespecting the sites — with allegations of littering and lighting dangerous fires in drought conditions.

Connor Farrimond, who runs the Malphas & Co online witchcraft shop and describes himself as an occultist, attacked modern druid groups for living out a "role-playing fantasy" and claimed that "what they're engaging in is nothing short of vandalism and a misguided quest for attention".

Not so, say Anglesey's druids, who celebrate important pagan dates such as the summer and winter solstices at Bryn Celli Ddu and who have said Farrimond's comments amount to religious prejudice.

Farrimond's attack, according to Kristoffer Hughes of the Anglesey Druid Order, is "formed without any meaningful engagement with the contemporary druid community or with those who dedicate their lives to preserving Welsh spiritual and cultural traditions. To caricature an entire religious community without dialogue is not scholarship; it is prejudice".

Farrimond, 29, is originally from Newcastle and moved to north Wales in 2016, opening Malphas & Co four years ago, serving the witchcraft community. He wrote on Facebook this month: "So-called modern druids have become something of a bane within the wider community of those interested in ancient history, practical magic and even archaeology.

"It's astonishing how many of these individuals, often sporting cheap robes and toys dressed up as ritual tools, parade around claiming to reconnect with Britain's ancient past. The reality, however, couldn't be further from authentic history. They tend to misinterpret and romanticise ancient customs, adapting them into a kind of role-playing fantasy that bears little resemblance to what we know of genuine prehistoric practices."

Druids at the Bryn Celli Ddu burial chamber

Farrimond told The Times that they "clamber all over reconstructed mounds" that are not structurally safe, and that they litter and light fires, despite recent heatwaves.

There are several druid organisations in the UK, with the two biggest — the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids, and the British Druidry Order — having more than 20,000 members.

The Anglesey Druid Order was established by Hughes in 1999 to "facilitate learning, devotion and celebration of the wisdom and historical significance" of the island of Anglesey.

Hughes disputed Farrimond's accusations of vandalism, saying: "This is a serious allegation. If individuals damage protected sites, they should absolutely be challenged ... But to imply that such behaviour represents modern druidry as a whole is unsupported."

He said his organisation consulted with Cadw, the Welsh historic environment service, and English Heritage to properly use ancient sites.

Farrimond said that he was not a lone voice in his criticisms: "Friends, family, customers, even people I speak to in passing all share this view."

Hughes said that he was open to discussion but defended druidry. "We are entirely open to conversation; we are not, however, obliged to remain silent in the face of prejudice," he said.

News Heatwave Britain

‘A jolt, then carriage jumped

Passengers tell how they were flung from seats, **Laurence Sleator**, **Emma Yeomans** and **Mario Ledwith** report

Nathan Cole is often nervous when he travels by rail. A tension comes over him when, on the Central Line on the London Underground, the carriages routinely shudder and swerve.

He felt the same trepidation as he sat on the 2.24pm Southern Rail service from London Victoria to Eastbourne yesterday and the shaking began. The 30-year-old soon found himself tossed to his side and staring through a window filled with dirt.

Beside him a woman was catapulted from her seat, appearing to Cole like she was “dropping from the sky” before almost landing on top of him.

Cole was among 150 passengers on the “packed” service who were left both shocked and bloodied after a derailment on Britain’s hottest day of the year that experts said could be down to the sweltering summer.

Passengers first knew that something was not quite right when a speeding sensation took hold of the train, which then began to rock from side to side.

Rob Bradley, who was travelling with his six-year-old daughter Mabel, watched as his carriage jumped “vertically upwards” as the driver pulled the emergency brake, bringing the eight-carriage train to a dramatic halt.

Bradley watched as their bags, as well as his laptop and AirPods, were tossed forward by the sudden jerk.

After the train “skidded” to a stop just north of Lewes railway station at 3.44pm, Bradley turned around, looked down the train and could see how close they had been to possible harm. “It was open and there was smoke and dust pouring into the carriage,” he said.

While carriage four in which he was travelling was upright, the fifth was among the three rear carriages that had slid down the embankment adjoining the rail line. All were now on their side.

One of those less fortunate than him was Cole, who was in an overturned carriage. “I’m looking at the window, I’m seeing dirt,” he said. “I’m thinking, I hope this window doesn’t burst, because that goes right in my face.”

He added: “Then I see the woman, right in front of me, just dropping from the sky. Then another old woman, who was holding on to the handle on the chair, when the train came to stop, I had to pick her up.”

Cole was not seriously injured but was taken to hospital to be checked. He said: “I’m still alive, but I was at the very back that took the brunt of it.”

A frenzy gripped the people in the toppled carriages, who had little idea what had happened. Shannon Jones, who was in the fifth carriage, said that passengers thought “we may have hit someone”. Charlie Hobden, 31, from Lewes, said that the train’s sudden halt “felt like a sliding snake”, telling the BBC: “We just went over and we were dragging along the floor.”

Inside the tossed carriages, as dazed passengers came to, some put their hands to their heads to discover blood streaming down and on to their clothing. Others had received blows that felt like a punch to the ribs.

Those aboard said that the train had felt “quite packed”, with a sizeable contingent of older passengers and children enjoying the school holidays.

Given the make-up of those travelling and the seriousness of the derailment, it is fortunate the injuries were not worse. British Transport Police said two people were seriously injured. Last night 20 people were in hospital.

That may be thanks to the train’s speed, which experts said was probably below 40mph. The incident happened between Cooksbridge and Lewes, a journey of five minutes, meaning it would not have picked up much speed.

In the aftermath, some of those in the tossed carriages managed to clamber out, standing atop the side of the carriages where they surveyed the scene.

The probable cause of the derailment was staring straight at them. Images from the site appeared to show rails in a severely buckled state. Although the cause of the incident has yet to be determined, high temperatures are known to increase the risk of buckling. Temperatures in Lewes are thought to have peaked at about 33C yesterday.

The driver log from the train said that the incident appeared to be down to a “track defect”.

Other experts said the derailment may have been caused by a landslip.

James MacCleary, the Lewes MP, said rail companies had reported that the extremely dry conditions were affecting embankments and track conditions and that speed conditions had been put in place around the area.

The transport secretary, Heidi Alexander, said she was “deeply concerned” over reports of the derailment.

Helena Dollimore, the Hastings & Rye MP, described the incident as “extremely distressing”, adding: “I think all of us rely on our local trains and take for granted that they run safely.”

The derailment led to a major incident being declared and a significant rescue operation swung into action. About 14 ambulances, ten fire engines and a fleet of police cars and technical rescue vehicles were sent to the area from across East and West Sussex.

Bradley said that when train staff initially informed passengers what had just happened, the “announcement was relatively jovial in that there was going to be a ‘delay to the service’”.

The impact was felt elsewhere, with Southern Rail closing all lines running through the station, announcing major disruption until 10pm and warning of a knock-on impact at Gatwick airport.

As sirens sounded around them and helicopters flew overhead, passengers were kept on board the train for about 90 minutes as police checked the line was not live. By 6pm all had been successfully extracted from the train. Locals brought flasks of tea and cold drinks to the cordon as rescuers sweltered in the latest heatwave.

Lana Ludwig was among those who were left “pretty banged up” in the incident that resulted in her being propped up over another passenger.

The 56-year-old American told Sky News: “These moments, everybody kind of pulls together.” She described how passengers checked on each other before the emergency services arrived.

Additional reporting by Charlie Parker

in air and filled with smoke'

SWNS; EDDIE MITCHELL FOR THE TIMES

Several carriages tipped over leaving a number of passengers trapped when the Southern train derailed just north of Lewes yesterday afternoon. About 150 people were on board, two of whom were seriously injured. Last night 20 people were being treated in hospital. There were chaotic scenes in the aftermath, left. Some of the passengers were able to leave the scene unaided

Inquiry may focus on extreme summer heat

Analysis

While the shock of passengers caught up in the East Sussex train derailment will take a long time to subside, the industry has already turned its attention to what caused it (Laurence Sleator writes).

The 14:24 Southern Rail service that derailed was an eight-carriage slow service from London Victoria to Eastbourne. It is thought to have derailed more than an hour into the journey between Cooksbridge and Lewes.

Fortunately, with a journey time of only five minutes between the stations it is likely that the train was not travelling at high speed. Industry sources estimated it would have been unlikely to have reached 40mph, any faster and the incident could have been more serious.

At times like this, teams from the Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB) attend to gather evidence to try to determine what happened.

An interim report giving an outline of the details tends to be published within days or weeks and then a more thorough examination months later. All the factors will be looked at by RAIB even if it is to rule them out.

Expert theories are already focusing on the scorching summer weather. This is because Britain's steel tracks can be vulnerable to particularly warm weather, getting up to 20 degrees hotter than the air temperature.

With temperatures in Lewes today of more than 30C on what was the country's hottest day of the year, it meant that the track could have been in excess of 50C.

As steel absorbs heat it expands, leaving it vulnerable to buckling, although speed restrictions on trains are often implemented to reduce the risk of derailing.

Experts said that the pictures from the site indicated that this could have been the cause of the derailment. With the three rear carriages derailed, they suggested that a buckling may have occurred after the front of the train passed.

This will become clear in any investigation by RAIB with the forward facing train camera and the driver themselves in clear view of the tracks as they approached.

The lack of rain may have also been a factor. After England's warmest spring on record and hot summer, the ground under long stretches of the railway may have dried out and shrunk. This can cause the track to drop in places and become uneven.

Norman Baker, the former Lewes MP and former transport minister, told Times Radio: "The suggestion might be ... a landslip, or obviously another possible explanation is that it was due to rails buckling in the heat."

James MacCleary, the Lib Dem MP for Lewes, said that he had a meeting last week with GTR, the parent company of Southern, to discuss the track and the "fact it has been a bit bumpier in recent months".

The most recent serious train derailment was in June this year when Shaun Burton, 60, was killed when the East Midlands Railway (EMR) service from Corby to London St Pancras he was driving hit the back of a stationary EMR Nottingham to London service.

An interim report found that Burton applied the brakes on his train while travelling at 76mph, about nine seconds before it collided with the other train, causing both to derail.

Concerns raised about tracks before derailment

Continued from page 1

Cooksbridge and Lewes. Experts said the short journey time meant it was unlikely to have been travelling at more than 40mph.

Pictures from the crash site showed passengers standing on top of upturned carriages and some who had managed to get out helping others.

Nathan Cole, 30, a passenger in a carriage that overturned, said the train shook and swerved before derailing. He added: "We heard the suspension, kind of; it went to full force."

When the carriage overturned, the window next to him filled with earth. He said: "I'm thinking, I hope this window doesn't burst, because if the window breaks that goes right in my face. Then I see the woman, right in front of me, just dropping from the sky."

Cole was not seriously injured but was taken to hospital to be checked.

Another passenger, Susan, in her seventies, said: "I'm just happy to be alive."

She said they had escaped by ladder through the guard's door on "what was now the roof", and she was triaged "out in the fields and the floodplains".

MacCleary said: "I had a meeting literally last week with [Greater Thameslink Railway], who are the parent company of Southern Rail, and we did discuss the track and the fact that it has been a bit bumpier in recent months, which is possibly a result of the incredibly hot weather we've had recently."

The Rail Accident Investigation Branch is investigating and an interim report is expected soon.

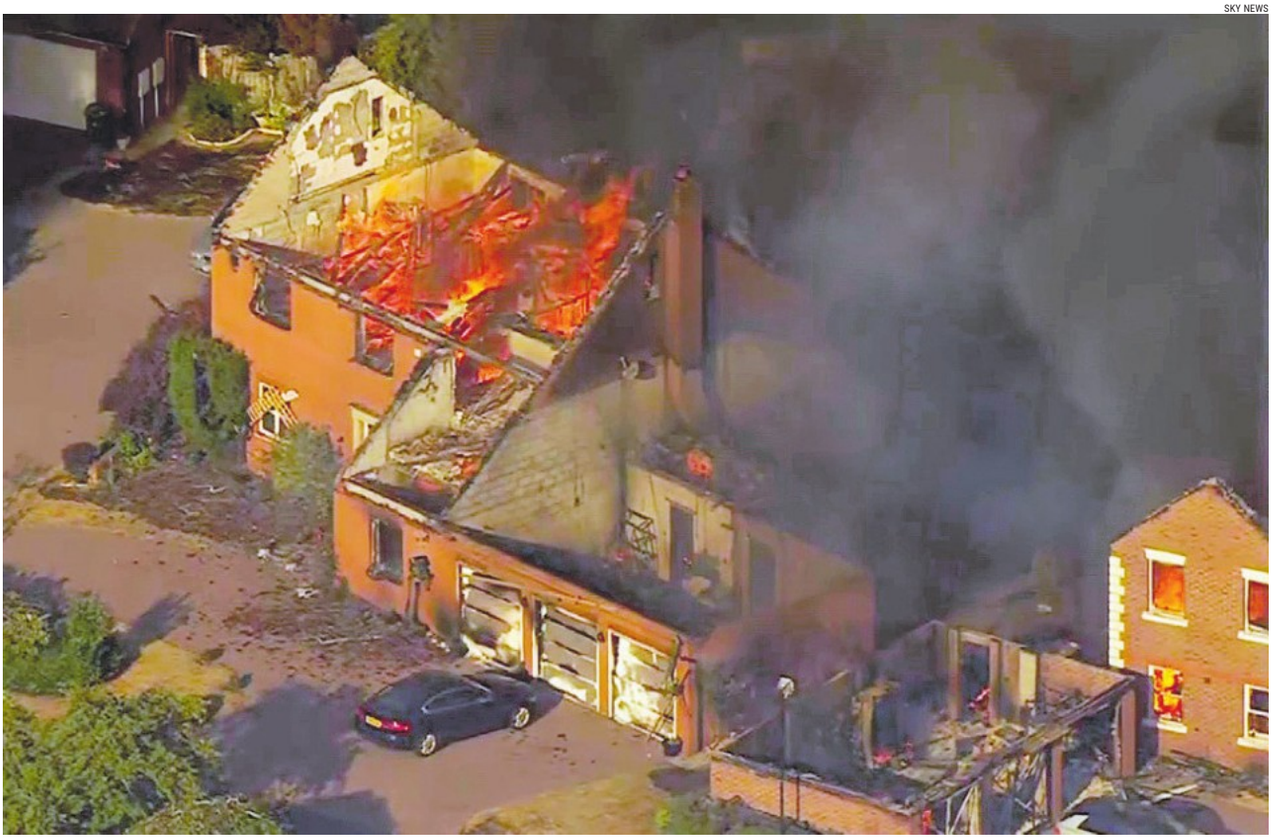
Fire engulfs homes, page 6

News Heatwave Britain

‘Apocalyptic’ fire engulfs homes

Lowri Lewis
Eleanor Hayward Health Editor

SKY NEWS



Flames destroyed houses and wildfires raged across Britain yesterday after the highest temperature of the year was recorded and firefighters and a child had to be admitted to hospital.

The West Midlands was badly affected, with a grass fire in Stourbridge setting six properties alight and four homes burnt down in Stoke-on-Trent.

A child was taken to hospital after inhaling smoke and six other people were treated.

Fires that are being battled by firefighters elsewhere in the country have been alight for almost a week.

The Met Office declared yesterday the hottest day of the year so far, as a provisional temperature of 38.1C was recorded at Kew Gardens in west London, exceeding the previous high of 38C on June 28.

Firefighters were called just before 1.30pm to the large grass fire near Stourbridge Golf Club and the 40-acre blaze spread across roads and to the six houses.

According to West Midlands fire and rescue service, three firefighters and a child had to be taken to hospital.

Another six members of the public were treated for the effects of breathing in smoke.

Andrew Tromans, who represents Wollaston & Stourbridge Town on Dudley borough council, described the fire in Stourbridge as “apocalyptic”.

Across the rest of the West Midlands, four homes were destroyed by a fire in Sandyford, Stoke-on-Trent and a woman was seriously injured in another fire that badly damaged houses in Castle Vale, Birmingham, and made the roof of one building collapse.

In Warwickshire, a major incident was declared over what the fire and rescue service described as a “large fire” in Salford Priors, Stratford-upon-Avon, but was later stood down.

There was also a fire in nearby Pershore, Worcestershire, where one person was treated for smoke inhalation and 30 homes were evacuated.

Hereford and Worcester fire and rescue service said that about 200 properties had been left without power following the fire.

Richard Parker, the West Midlands mayor, said: “There is an extremely worrying and fast moving situation with multiple fires across our region.

“I’m concerned for the families being asked to evacuate their homes and those whose journeys have been delayed or cancelled — but safety must come first.”

He added: “Our emergency services are doing an amazing job in extreme circumstances and we will continue to give them our full support.”

The M6 northbound near Birmingham was also temporarily closed between junctions 5 and 6 as a result of smoke from the wildfires.

A wildfire that has engulfed half of the 660-acre Holme Fen nature reserve south of Peterborough in Cambridgeshire entered its sixth day.

About 130 firefighters were continuing to tackle another wildfire in the New Forest, Hampshire, which started on Sunday and has so far affected an area about the size of 230 football pitches. The fire began when a van caught fire on the A31 and 23 drivers were forced to abandon their vehicles as the fire took hold.

A major incident was also declared in Wiltshire as firefighters struggled to cope with the intense demand in the county.

Crews from across the area battled a significant fire near Westbury White Horse yesterday and homes were evacuated in south Wales as firefighters battled seven blazes across the region.

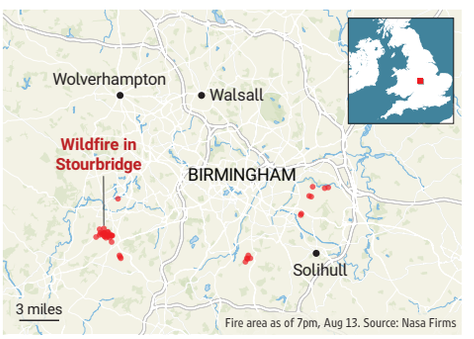
Steve Wright, general secretary of the Fire Brigades Union, said: “We are very concerned to see wildfires raging in Stourbridge, South Wales and elsewhere around the UK.

“Firefighters are bravely tackling every blaze trying to keep the public and all our communities safe. Our members are also assisting other emergency services dealing with the derailed train in Lewes. It is imperative we increase the resilience of the fire and rescue service, recruit 5,000 more firefighters and provide adequate PPE so our members can tackle these incidents in the safest way possible.”

During the heatwaves, nearly half of NHS trusts have recorded temperatures above 33C on wards since June.

The figures, obtained under the Freedom of Information Act by the Liberal Democrats, show a high of 41.8C was recorded in June at the Northern Care Alliance Trust in Manchester.

Few hospitals are equipped with air conditioning or adequate ventilation.



A wildfire set houses alight in the West Midlands town of Stourbridge, above and below, where horses had to be led to safety because their field was ablaze. There were more wildfires across the region

Pubgoer, 102, dies after he was 'pushed in noise row'

Herbie Russell

A 102-year-old man has died after allegedly being pushed when he asked for the music to be turned down at his local pub.

Phillip Ormerod was allegedly assaulted at the Crow's Nest pub in Cwmbran, south Wales, at about 10.25pm on August 1, Gwent police said.

A 56-year-old man from Llanelli was arrested on suspicion of section 20 assault and later released under investigation.

Police, who were called to the pub alongside the Welsh Ambulance Service after a report of an assault, initially said that the man was in a critical condition in hospital. The force later confirmed that Ormerod had died.

They are appealing for anyone who was at the pub between 10pm and 11pm on the night of the incident, which was a Saturday, to come forward.

Ormerod's son Robert said that he wanted justice for his father. He described him as a popular character who young people would buy a beer for when he visited the bar.

Ormerod is understood to have been visiting the Crow's Nest for a drink when he went onto a stage to complain about the volume of the music.

"[That's] the most upsetting part," Robert Ormerod said. "He wasn't going to live for ever but it's not a nice way, obviously in pain.

"We want to see justice, of course. It would have been nice if he'd gone quietly in his sleep. He was in hospital, suffering, for a week and a half."

Ormerod, a great-grandfather, worked as a design draughtsman before his retirement.

He continued living in Llanyrafon, a suburb of Cwmbran, after the death of his wife 40 years ago and was visited often by his two sons.

Robert said: "I used to visit him regularly and then towards the end me and my brother used to keep the house clean as best we could and buy his food, because his eyesight had deteriorated."

He said his father had been diagnosed with dementia "a couple of years ago, he probably had it before that". His his father would visit the pub two or three times a week for a beer and became a familiar face. "I suppose he became a pub character," he said.

Pubgoers told Wales News that Ormerod walked on to the stage while SuperHans, a Llanelli-based band, were playing. One witness said: "My understanding from the police and staff at the time was that the 102-year-old, who lived independently and was a regular at the pub, went on to the stage, which was up three steps, to ask for the music to be turned down."

Locals described the centenarian as "lovely" but "confused". Casey Smith, manager of the nearby Llanyrafon Social Club, confirmed that Ormerod was a regular at his venue too.

After the incident at the Crow's Nest, the band took down its Facebook page. Before it disappeared, one of its members posted a statement saying: "For personal reasons, I am stepping away from [the band]. Until recently, it's been a great eight years and I've met great people and played some brilliant gigs. Thank you everyone."

Detective Chief Inspector Shelley Comley, of Gwent police, said that he wanted to remind people there was "a family at the heart" of the investigation "processing the loss of a loved one".

A spokesman for the pub said: "Our thoughts and deepest condolences are with his family, friends and all those affected by this sad loss."

Phillip Ormerod fell from a stage during a gig at the Crow's Nest pub

TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER RICHARD POHLE

Ivan Staines, 99, below left, Paul Terry, 101, and Alfred Cooley, 100, flew in dual-cockpit Spitfires with Times photographer Richard Pohle alongside in a "chase aircraft". Cooley, Terry and Staines with Staines's great-grandson before take-off

How I got dream shot of veterans in Spitfires

It was an invitation too good to ignore (Richard Pohle writes). An offer from the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans to photograph three Second World War veterans taking to the skies in three dual-cockpit Spitfires.

This, I knew, would make great pictures, but would I be able to fly alongside? It was something I was desperate to do because I love vintage aircraft.

The day belonged to the three veterans, Paul Terry, 101, Ivan Staines, 99, and Alfred Cooley, 100. I arrived at Biggin Hill aerodrome in south London early but tried to temper my expectations about flying alongside as there were just four spaces on the "chase aircraft".

The veterans arrived with their families, other veterans and charity members. With Staines was his excited five-year-old great-grandson, who played with a small toy Spitfire as he sat feet away from the real things.

After learning I could join the chase aircraft, I was so excited I couldn't sit still. To fly alongside Spitfires is an aircraft enthusiast's dream.

The veterans were briefed and put into flight overalls and, in the scorching heat of Britain's fifth heatwave of the summer, escorted to their waiting Spitfires.

At the same time, four of us squeezed into our small Piper Saratoga chase aircraft. Soon we were airborne, straining to see the Spitfires.

A Spitfire in flight is an absolute scene of beauty but in the turbulence it was difficult to frame them in the viewfinder, especially as I was aware of shooting on a slower shutter speed of 1/160 sec to have movement in the propeller.

Soon it got messy. I had a TV cameraman leaning on my shoulder, as well as two other photographers all pushing against each other trying to frame the picture. "Human Jenga in a small aircraft" was how it was described.

Because of the late take-off, we had just two minutes with all three in formation. I knew I had a nicely framed picture, but was it sharp? With all the pushing and shoving and turbulence, it would be difficult to be certain until we landed.

The main thing was the three veterans landed with smiles on their faces. It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience for them, but also for this photographer.

Bishop accused of raping girl after pilgrimage to Lourdes

David Brown
Chief News Correspondent

A bishop raped a girl earlier in his career after they made a pilgrimage to Lourdes, a court has been told.

The Right Rev David Oakley, Catholic Bishop of Northampton, is alleged to have attacked the girl, who was under 16, in the early 2000s.

Sarah Madden, for the prosecution, told Westminster magistrates' court yesterday: "Oakley and the girl started dating after going on a pilgrimage to Lourdes. She recalls having sex on at least two occasions."

Oakley, 70, appeared via video link from his lawyer's office, wearing a white open-necked shirt. He did not enter a plea.

Paul Goldspring, the chief magistrate of England and Wales, ordered the bishop to appear at the Old Bailey on September 10.

Oakley was a parish priest at the time of the alleged offences. He was arrested in September last year after an allegation was made to Staffordshire police.

Most Catholic dioceses in England organise pilgrimages to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes.

The tradition started in 1858 after Bernadette Soubirous, 14, reported visions of the Virgin Mary at the Grotto of Massabielle in France. Pilgrims believe the grotto's water has healing properties and can cure illnesses and disability.

Oakley was ordained in 1980 and served in several parishes within the Archdiocese of Birmingham. He was appointed Bishop of Northampton in 2020, covering Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

The Pope has appointed the Archbishop of Westminster, the Most Rev Richard Moth, as apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Northampton.

David Oakley was a parish priest at the time of the alleged offences

The diocese said in a statement when Oakley was charged in June: "We understand that this will be very distressing for all concerned but cannot comment further on an active legal process."

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales said after the charge: "We are profoundly aware that the report of this allegation may reawaken painful memories for many people and again offer an unreserved apology to those who have been hurt by abuse in the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

"The Catholic Church in England and Wales maintains a zero-tolerance policy for abuse in the Church and in wider society, and we are co-operating fully with the statutory authorities. Our immediate focus is on providing pastoral support and ensuring that we, as the Church, can continue our mission safely and transparently."

Water firms treat customers 'like a blank cheque'

Adam Vaughan Environment Editor
Robert Lea Industrial Editor
Steven Swinford Political Editor

Andy Burnham has accused water companies of treating customers like a "blank cheque" as he hit out at a fresh round of bill increases approved by a regulator.

The prime minister said he was "angry" after Ofwat gave five water companies a green light on Thursday to collectively spend an extra £3.4 billion by 2030. The investment comes on top of the sector's existing £104 billion plan to tackle sewage spills, build new reservoirs and other infrastructure.

The provisional approval will make little difference to the bills of customers with Severn Trent Water, Thames Water, Wessex Water, and South East Water. However, the four million customers of Southern Water, who were already facing a 53 per cent increase by 2030, the steepest in the sector, will bear the brunt of the new decision.

The company has the most expensive bills in the country, at an average £759 this financial year. They will rise to more than £800 next year as a result of Ofwat's approval.

The impact will be slightly less the following year but typical bills will remain above £800 a year because of inflation and previously granted increases in spending.

Ofwat said that the additional charges would be used to fund £3.4 billion worth of new projects including infrastructure for housing, data centres and measures to make drinking water safer. The approvals are subject to a consultation which closes next month.

"We will track performance to ensure companies are delivering the expected improvements for customers and the environment," Helen Campbell, executive director for delivery at the regulator, said. "If they don't, expenditure can be clawed back."

However, Burnham said: "I understand why people are angry — I am too. The truth is customers have been asked to pay more for years, yet serious pollution incidents are at record levels and the pipes are still leaking.

"None of which is the billpayer's fault, who should not be treated as a bottomless source of funding for other people's failures. Customers cannot be treated as a blank cheque. Where water companies seek to pass unnecessary costs on to households, they will be challenged.

"Our water industry has clearly not been working for people for far too long. That's why this government will be looking at how we can give the public more control and help keep bills as low as possible."

It is unclear what power Burnham has to limit bill rises. Significant sums are needed to curb sewage discharges and secure water supplies.

Water UK, the industry body, said: "This summer's drought has shown exactly why new investment is so vital. This expenditure will help to safeguard services, unlock new homes and business growth, and replace ageing infrastructure."

Southern Water has a hosepipe ban in place for customers in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The firm is alone in seeking a non-essential use ban, barring businesses from washing vehicles or filling public swimming pools, to ensure water supplies during drought.

It is a much more draconian step than a hosepipe ban. If ministers choose to approve the application, it would be the first time one has been granted in two decades.

The Lib Dems attacked the new round of bill increases. "Once again, billpayers are set to be rinsed for using an essential resource thanks to a useless regulator," Tim Farron, the party's environment spokesman, said.

"Ofwat is merely a rubber stamp for failure. Hardworking families are being forced to cough up another £3.4 billion to fix a broken network that greedy executives have neglected for decades."

Ofwat is in the process of being axed under Labour's water sector reforms, to be succeeded by a new "super-regulator" formed of four existing regulators. However, the reforms have been slow-moving recently and initial government hopes of passing a new water bill this year are fading. A white paper was published in January but a so-called transition plan, laying out much of the key detail of the reforms, has not materialised.

Southern Water said: "This is a draft decision from our regulator, which recognises that costs have risen as we work to deliver the improvements our customers want, including several of the largest water infrastructure projects in the country.

"We know customers might be worried about further increases in bills. We've worked hard to spread rises more evenly over the coming years to reduce the impact on households and have expanded the support we offer for those who need it most.

Andy Burnham said he wanted bills kept low

Agency criticises 'no hosepipe ban' boast

Adam Vaughan

A regulator has told a water company it is sending the "wrong message" to customers amid droughts after the firm said it had not experienced a hosepipe ban for more than three decades.

Severn Trent Water, which serves the Midlands, has seen record demand for water amid exceptionally hot and dry weather this summer.

Despite more than 27 million people living under a hosepipe ban in England and Wales at present, Severn Trent is one of the few firms that has not imposed one.

The company has said it is proud not to have required a hosepipe ban for so long. "Right now, there is no hosepipe ban in place for Severn Trent customers. We've not had one in our area since 1995, and of course we'd like that to continue," its website said.

However, in private meetings the company clashed with the Environment Agency (EA) over how best to communicate the need to conserve water during a dry spell.

Notes from a meeting of EA and water company staff on July 8 show that an official from the regulator said: "[Redacted] noted we are still using the 'We haven't had a hosepipe bans in 30 years' and feels it sends the wrong message." In turn, the water company said it was stating a fact "to help correct confusion where some of our customers believe there is a hosepipe ban or thought we did have one last year".

"The narrative is to encourage customers to do their part to continue not having restrictions," said one Severn Trent employee, in documents obtained by The Times using transparency laws.

The EA was also critical of the visibility of the water firm's plan for preparing for drought, the key document each water company draws up for contingency measures during dry periods. The regulator told the firm its drought plan was "quite hidden on the [company] website".

The meeting notes and emails offer a rare insight into the friction among officials planning for drought and how best to communicate with the public.

The water company was also critical of the EA.

On July 29, the company said how disappointed it was that the regulator had failed to properly give feedback on its drought plan. When approached for comment, Severn Trent said that since the meetings it had received feedback on its drought plan from the EA.

An EA spokeswoman said: "We all have a role to play in using a little less water to make sure our current water reserves last. Every drop we can save is a drop more for our farmers, wildlife and rivers."

Almost three quarters of England is now officially in drought. The Met Office said that despite cooler temperatures expected after a 38C peak yesterday, it has low confidence in how much rain is coming over the next ten days.

Cooper takes swipe at Starmer's leadership style

Constance Kampfner

The health secretary has criticised Sir Keir Starmer's leadership style and said Labour had not "done government very well" during his premiership.

Yvette Cooper, who was one of Starmer's most senior ministers, accused the former prime minister of sidelining her during policy announcements and of abandoning the party's "missions" within a few months of gaining power.

Cooper, who served as home secretary and foreign secretary under Starmer, is said to have been one of several senior colleagues to have privately called for him to go before he announced his resignation in June.

Speaking on the Political Currency podcast, she said that while Labour had made "massive progress" on some issues since coming to power in 2024, including on NHS waiting lists and the number of police officers on the streets, "the focus shifted quite a lot".

"We had missions in the first six months and then they kind of disappeared," she told the former Conservative chancellor George Osborne, who was presenting without his regular co-host Ed Balls, who is Cooper's husband.

Cooper, who was made health secretary in Andy Burnham's reshuffle last month, also blamed Starmer's "style" of leadership for Labour's declining fortunes, which she characterised as "bring me solutions, not problems".

"I'm not sure you can do that in politics," Cooper said. "The thing you see with Andy is, it's like, 'Hang on, bring me the problems. I want to talk to you about the problems. I want to engage ... I want us to work together in solving them'."

JOE GIDDENS/PA; BEN MONTGOMERY/GETTY IMAGES

Nigel Farage enjoys a pint after voting in the Clacton by-election. Support for the Reform UK leader's main rival, Count Binface, was in evidence in graffiti on Clacton promenade and in a figure by the side of a road in the Essex resort. Despite the main parties boycotting the by-election, the ballot paper contained 34 candidates and was 90cm (about 3ft) long, the longest ballot paper in British electoral history

Hospitality chief lambasts Labour over rising costs

Steven Swinford

Labour has been accused of treating the hospitality industry with "contempt" in a warning that red tape and tax rises will fuel youth unemployment.

An official impact statement for Angela Rayner's employment reforms found they would have a negative impact on companies, by forcing them to contend with new red tape, extra staffing costs and lost revenue.

It found that the plans could impose "eye-watering" costs of up to £3 billion a year on businesses.

The government analysis found that sectors such as hospitality and retail, which have already borne the brunt of increases to the employers rate of national insurance and the minimum wage, would be worst affected by the changes.

It said the plans would make it harder for employers to respond to changes in demand, with a potential knock-on impact on revenue and investment.

Allen Simpson, chief executive of UKHospitality, told Times Radio yesterday: "We had a budget which, in 2024, protected the tax on banks, on manufacturing, on fintech, on medtech, and raised it on hospitality and on retail, and then they doubled down on that last year. So we saw 45 per cent of all job losses in the economy come just within hospitality.

"So I think the contempt for hospitality which we have seen, and I would use that word over the last two years, is much more localised than a broader anti-business sentiment.

"I am very hopeful that we see change with the change of prime minister and the change of chancellor, certainly it can't be worse."

Simpson said the government's plans to end zero-hours contracts would hit young people hard.

"The way the government are proposing to go about it sets a burden on the employer, which will make lots of jobs unaffordable to offer," he added.

"So you offer fewer jobs, and that means yet more job losses, particularly among young people. It is going to be young people disproportionately who are doing these sorts of flexible jobs."

He said he was "hopeful" that Andy Burnham's government would offer the hospitality sector more support on business rates, national insurance and potentially a VAT cut, which he said could lead to "positive change".

But he added: "If we don't, [I] have to say the Neets crisis [young people not in education, employment or training] is going to get worse."

The government is consulting on proposals which could give new rights to all workers on zero-hours contracts. At present, such contracts do not specify a minimum number of hours to which workers are entitled.

The reforms would force companies to give staff a guaranteed number of hours a week, reflecting their current workload. It would also require them to give workers "reasonable notice of shifts" and to pay them for shifts that have been "cancelled, curtailed or moved at short notice".

Allen Simpson said ending zero-hours contracts would hit young people hard

In an assessment, officials calculated that if all employees on zero-hours contracts were included in the scheme, it could cost the businesses £2.9 billion a year. However, if ministers restricted the new rights to those working fewer hours then the cost to business could fall to £1.1 billion a year.

It added that the minimum cost of the policy to business would be £350 million a year, if only those workers on the fewest hours were included.

A government spokesperson said: "We are absolutely committed to ending exploitative zero-hours contracts, where workers bear all the financial risk when hours, shifts and earnings are unpredictable.

"These reforms will give workers in every postcode greater income security and predictability of hours and while no final decisions have been made, we're consulting to get the detail right and ensure this works in the real world."

We can quickly free up prison space by releasing jailed women

Edwina Grosvenor
Comment

The system is broken. Prisons are full, court backlogs run into years and probation is chronically understaffed. Sex offenders are being released early. Family members of victims express betrayal. It is a nightmare for the government, a very real crisis in a state institution.

The test for the new prime minister is whether he can keep the public safe once the headlines move on. That means reserving prison for those who pose a serious risk and investing in credible community alternatives for those who do not.

Prisons are an unglamorous brief and there is little electoral upside. Most politicians dread it and we are on our twelfth minister in ten years. Yet, as we have seen in the past week, it can swiftly derail a government when appalling crimes and outrage-fuelled social media collide.

Those of us working in the system have witnessed the car crash in real time. My organisation, One Small Thing, operates in scores of male and female prisons. In one horrific, well-publicised case, a teenager who was on remand, awaiting trial, gave birth alone in her cell, despite repeated calls for help. She bit through the umbilical cord with her teeth. Lacking urgent care, the baby died as she cradled its tiny corpse in her bunk. When she finally stood trial she was found not guilty.

Too many women being held in jail go on to be found not guilty. While waiting for court many lose so much, including their job, their house and their children, often to the care system. Some women will rightly be sentenced to prison from the crown court for serious crimes, but the vast majority do not fall into this category and are far more likely to hurt themselves than anyone in the community.

At One Small Thing, we designed and built Hope Street — a replicable, scalable residential alternative to custody for women and their children. We divert women from expensive prisons and work closely with local drug, alcohol and mental health teams to improve health and combat addiction, while they serve their court-appointed community sentence. Their children remain with them, when otherwise they would begin a costly and traumatic journey through care.

Prisons are bursting, but places must be available for the courts to send people who have committed violent and sexual offences. So what is the solution? Let's start creating space by releasing those who pose the least risk to the public. Overwhelmingly this is women.

Let's end the monstrous, expensive and retrograde practice of locking up thousands of women for minor crimes or holding so many on remand. Let's embrace community alternatives, which cost a fraction of a prison sentence and are far more effective. Everyone benefits, including the government which can refit these women's prisons quickly for male prisoners. HMP Bronzefield in Ashford, Surrey, for instance, one of the UK's largest women's prisons, is built to a male specification.

This week's news cycle will pass; we will resume our stance of toxic lethargy, but the damage will have been done to public trust and to victims. There are answers. We know how to support women to move away from crime. If we wish to have a justice system that rehabilitates, that reduces harm in society, that is just, then we need to act with urgency.

We can do this. HMP Wandsworth is helping men transform themselves through "Scandi wings", inspired by Scandinavian prisons. A recent story celebrated the effect of a garden in HMP Birmingham. The Clink restaurant chain trains inmates in catering and helps them into employment after release.

Our new prime minister promised bravery and radicalism. Justice is always the ultimate test. You want to be brave? Listen to the experts. Follow the data on prisons, rehabilitation and crime reduction. Justice ministers that I have worked with from both parties have had a striking unanimity about solutions, they just have not been in office long enough to drive through the changes upon which they all agree.

I am optimistic because our justice sector is awash with brilliant people who know what works. What we need now is a government brave enough to scale what works. Most importantly, an effective justice system will keep all of us safer.

Lady Edwina Grosvenor is a criminologist and founder of the prison reform organisation One Small Thing

News

Study offers some friendly advice on how to feel healthy

Kaya Burgess Science Correspondent

"A principal fruit of friendship is the ease and discharge of the fullness and swellings of the heart," Francis Bacon wrote. A scientific study has now proven him right.

Feeling satisfied with the quality of the friendships in your life is strongly linked with a boost in how healthy you feel, both mentally and physically, the research has found. It showed that strong relationships could not only help mental health, but also boost the perception of physical health.

On a scale of zero to ten, people who rated their friendships as "excellent" scored their mental health 4.6 points higher than those who rated them as "poor". The former group also rated their physical health 3.4 points higher, the researchers from Kütahya Health Sciences University in Turkey found.

The bad news is that the UK ranked 20th out of 22 countries for satisfaction with friendships, above China and Japan. Britons rated their happiness with their relationships at 6.26 out of 10.

The UK also ranked 19th out of 22, above Germany, Turkey and Japan, when people were asked to rate their mental health, and 21st out of 22, above only Japan, when asked to rate their physical health. Veli Durmus, who led the study, published in the Journal of Mental Health, analysed data from 204,907 adults across 22 countries taken from a project called the Global Flourishing Study.

They were asked to rate how content they were with their friendships and relationships, and also how good their relationships were with their parents during childhood, from "very good" to "very bad". They were also asked to rate their mental and physical health, while factors including income, age and education were taken into account.

Durmus said: "I found that people who were more satisfied with their friendships and relationships also tended to report better mental and physical health."

There was a similar pattern, although with a weaker link, for those who had very good childhood relationships with their parents. Being married, having enough money and identifying with a religion, particularly Islam, were also associated with better mental and physical health scores.

People in Indonesia rated satisfaction with their friendships most highly, while those in Japan scored lowest. Tanzania rated highest for mental health and Indonesia for physical health. Japan scored lowest on both of these.

JAMIE WILLIAMSON

Big splash A rider gallops along the shallow waters on Irvine Beach in Ayrshire

Quintagram® No 2646

Solve all five concise clues using each letter underneath once only

1 Formally attired (5)

_ _ _ _ _

2 Highland Games pole (5)

_ _ _ _ _

3 Icy dessert (6)

_ _ _ _ _ _

4 From Lhasa, eg (7)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _

5 Long-term financial bond (9)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

A	A	B	B	B	B	B	C
D	D	E	E	E	E	E	E
E	I	N	N	O	O	R	R
R	R	S	T	T	T	T	U

Solutions see T2 MindGames p15
Cryptic clues T2 MindGames p14

Moth returns to the light

A colony of a rare moth species has been discovered at a National Trust site 74 years after it was last recorded there. Dave Wainwright, who works at the charity Butterfly Conservation, said it was a career highlight to find England's second population of the dark bordered beauty at Wallington estate in Northumberland. The other is at Strensall Common in Yorkshire.

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Sex claims no fantasy, insists ex-pupil

Lara Bowman

A man who has accused his former teacher of having sex with him when he was a child has denied being a "fantasist" who invented the allegations.

Sally-Anne Bowen, 65, is on trial at Harrow crown court, accused of eight counts of indecent assault against two men who cannot be named for legal reasons.

The prosecution alleges that she had sexual relationships with both men, then aged around 14 or 15, when she was their teacher at Christ's College school in Finchley, in the late 1980s.

Mark Kimsey, Bowen's barrister, yesterday questioned one of the complainants, who claims that he slept with Bowen "about twenty or thirty times", about what he thought a fantasist was. He replied: "I believe it's someone that indulges in fantasies."

Kimsey pressed, asking whether he would agree that a fantasist entertains "unrealistic ideas" and blurs fantasy with reality. "I think the question's quite insulting," the complainant responded.

When Kimsey said that Bowen did not accept engaging in any form of sexual activity, the complainant responded: "Well then, that is the definition of a fantasist."

He alleged some of the sexual acts Bowen asked him to perform were "perverse", adding: "I'm a 'fantasist', right? That's not a part of anyone's fantasy, to be involved in perversion."

He told the jury that Bowen had "drummed it" into him that he could not tell anyone about their alleged relationship. He confided in only one person, a best friend at another school, adding: "Years she got to teach, because I remained silent."

In a police interview played to the jury, he said that Bowen dressed in a way that was "sexually provocative", describing how she used "to wear tight Levi jeans and black skinny pants that you could see everything in, and a black mini skirt". While he could not deny enjoying the sex, the "games" and "secrets", he added: "For me it was the destruction of my education."

He told police: "I would like to get in a room with all those teachers, and Sally-Anne Bowen, and say, 'that's my life', because you only get one."

Madeleine Wolfe, for the prosecution, told the court that one lunchtime Bowen snatched a pornographic magazine from one of the boys and his friends. He expected her to confiscate it but instead she pointed to an image of a naked woman and likened herself to the model, she told the jury. This led to the boy returning to her Golders Green flat, where they kissed, the jury heard.

Wolfe said the boy "felt that he had fallen in love with her". After his mother grew suspicious and raised concerns with the school, she was told Bowen no longer worked there, the court heard. Wolfe said that Bowen, of Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, was entrusted with the care and welfare of pupils and abused that trust.

Bowen denies the charges. The trial continues.

Sally-Anne Bowen, 65, is accused of eight counts of indecent assault in the 1980s

Lab-grown diamonds are a girl's best friend

The traditional route to owning a diamond involved finding somebody willing to buy you one (Andrew Ellson writes).

However, the rise of cheaper, laboratory-grown stones means that increasing numbers of women are dispensing with that requirement, according to the chief executive of the jewellers Swarovski.

Alexis Nasard said lab-grown diamonds were "enabling self-purchase for women", in contrast with traditionally mined stones "where in most instances it was a man offering a ring to a woman".

In an interview with The Financial Times, he said: "Today, a woman comes into our store. She sees it. She's beautiful. She tries it and says, 'You know what? Let me get it [for] myself. I've earned this,' and we find that very endearing and encouraging."

The change has been helped by a dramatic fall in the cost of producing lab-grown diamonds, which have the same chemical and physical properties as mined stones but are instead manufactured, principally in China and India.

Lab-grown diamonds have rapidly taken up market share. More than 60 per cent of stones in diamond engagement rings sold in America are now lab-grown according to Nasard, who predicted the figure could reach 80 per cent within two years.

Industry analysts estimate that lab-grown stones now account for about a fifth of the global diamond jewellery market.

Their increasing ubiquity has been matched by their appearances on the red carpet. Jennifer Lawrence wore lab-grown diamonds at the Oscars in 2024, while Gillian Anderson wore a necklace featuring a lab-grown stone at the Cannes Film Festival last year. Demi Moore also appeared at Cannes this year in a necklace containing more than 150 carats of lab-created diamonds.

Sarah Jessica Parker, above, is working with a lab-grown diamond firm. Demi Moore, left, and Gillian Anderson wore them on the red carpet

Sarah Jessica Parker has gone further, becoming the global creative director and a shareholder of Astrea London, a specialist lab-grown diamond jeweller, where she is developing her own collections.

Meanwhile, prices have tumbled as production has expanded. De Beers, the world's leading natural diamond company, said in a report this year that wholesale prices for synthetic lab-grown diamonds had fallen by 93 per cent since 2020, to an average of about $100 a carat.

Retail prices have not fallen nearly as quickly, however. De Beers said the gap has allowed jewellery retailers to make unusually attractive margins on lab-grown stones, although increasing competition means that shop prices are expected to fall.

The disruption has also contributed to falling prices in the natural diamond market. Rapaport, an information provider for the diamond market, said increasing competition from synthetic stones has combined with weak demand to push down polished natural-diamond prices.

Swarovski, founded in Austria in 1895 and long associated with crystal jewellery and glassware, entered the lab-grown diamond market in 2018. It has never sold mined diamonds.

Nasard said falling wholesale prices had improved the company's profitability "to an extent", but insisted Swarovski did not price its jewellery according to the cost of the raw stone.

"Our pricing strategy is what it is, regardless of what the market does," he said. "When they buy Swarovski, they're buying a Swarovski diamond. They're not buying a raw material."

Complaints of painful eyes after solar eclipse

Eleanor Hayward Health Editor

Eye doctors are expecting to see a spate of patients suffering vision loss after staring directly at the sun during the solar eclipse on Wednesday.

After the total solar eclipse in August 1999, specialists in England identified 70 patients with eclipse-related sight loss in the days that followed, some of whom suffered permanent problems.

Millions of Britons gathered outdoors to watch the once-in-a-generation eclipse this week, but many were unable to get hold of the protective glasses required for safe viewing, as they sold out across the country.

Looking directly at the sun can damage the retina, the light-sensitive layer at the back of the eye, leading to a condition called solar retinopathy. Often people develop symptoms the next day, when they start experiencing problems such as blurred vision or a dark spot in the centre of their vision.

Videos and posts of social media users complaining that their eyes were hurting were widespread yesterday morning. One TikTok user commented: "My eyes are killing me. It's a feeling I've not felt before and I think I'm going to go blind." Another said: "They weren't lying. I looked directly at the eclipse and now there's a big reddish hue in my centre vision."

The impact of the 1999 eclipse was analysed in a study published in Nature in 2001. It found that in the months afterward, 70 people required NHS treatment for eclipse-related sight loss. The average age of the patients was 30, and half of them visited an ophthalmologist within two days of the eclipse. Most got better within a few months, with no one experiencing permanent blindness.

Alex Ionides, consultant ophthalmic surgeon at Moorfields Eye Hospital, said people should seek "urgent medical attention" if they developed symptoms including blurred vision, eye pain, redness or dark spots in their vision.

He said: "The damage may not be painful, so people often do not realise there is a problem until hours later."

Mohamed Elalfy, president of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists, said: "While some people recover over weeks or months, others can be left with permanent visual impairment."

A rare moment of national coming together, leading article, page 27

Vocational reset will take years to bed in, PM is told

Georgia Lambert
Nicola Woolcock Education Editor

Andy Burnham has been warned that it could take at least a generation for his favoured vocational qualifications to be widely adopted as a record number of school-leavers won places at university.

The prime minister plans new technical education routes for 14-year-olds to shift more young people towards employment as an alternative to academic study. He wants far more pupils to take work-related qualifications.

However, a record 262,820 teenagers will go to university this autumn despite widespread disquiet over student loan debt and graduate unemployment.

T-levels were introduced as a technical equivalent to A-levels in 2020, and V-levels, a vocational version, will be taught from September 2027. Any new qualifications introduced by Burnham would come on top of this.

The head of the exams regulator warned against too much churn. Sir Ian Bauckham, chief regulator of Ofqual, said it took years for new qualifications to be understood by families.

He said: "A-levels are probably the most famous qualification in the world, but they have been available since 1952. We've had a long run-in to establish public awareness. T-levels are the much newer kids on the block. They are beginning to establish a presence in the public mind. GCSEs [introduced in the late 1980s] are now well known. I think we need to establish a clear brand and stick with it until it establishes itself in the public mind.

"And it's only really when young people can say, 'Well, actually, my parents and in the case of A-levels, my grandparents did this qualification', that it becomes part of our collective culture and really has the credibility. So too much churn [is] bad, but you do have to arrive at a brand and a qualification type that you're prepared to stick with until it establishes itself."

Pepe Di'Iasio, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said T-levels and V-levels "must be embedded in the national psyche in the same way that A-levels have long been widely understood".

T-levels were awarded for the fifth time this year and nearly 20,000 pupils took them — up 65 per cent on last year — with an overall pass rate of 92.6 per cent. Lucy Powell, the education secretary, said the rise was "very encouraging", adding: "There is no single route to achieving your ambitions."

The regional gap in A-level results widened. Ofqual's figures showed a gap of 9.6 percentage points between London, and the East Midlands and North East in the proportion of A-levels awarded at least an A grade, up from 9.2 points last year. In London, 32.7 per cent of A-levels were graded A or above, compared with 23.1 per cent in both the East Midlands and North East. The South East recorded 31.5 per cent.

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said: "Regional disparities in A-level grades remain a concern. Levels of poverty, varying investment in education, health, social care and other support services and infrastructure, and the lingering impact of the pandemic may all have a part to play."

Whiteman said it was "crucial" that the government's devolution proposals and its role in shaping new technical education pathways were developed to close regional attainment gaps.

Sir David Bell, vice-chancellor of the University of Sunderland and a former head of Ofsted, said: "I agree with the prime minister when it comes to the value of different kinds of opportunities available to students after they leave school or college. But last year over 289,000 16 to 19-year-olds [chose] to come to university and therefore I think it's certainly seen for many students as a really good option. In addition to that, over 100,000 mature students, that's people over the age of 21, chose to come into higher education."

Although a record number of students are going to university this year, the total number of school-leavers is higher than ever, and a smaller proportion of them are starting a degree.

Overall, private school pupils got A or above in 48.6 per cent of their results, up from 48.4 per cent last year. Academies' pupils got top grades in 23.5 per cent of their results, down from 26.5 per cent, and comprehensive pupils increased the proportion of their results at top grades from 22.6 to 23 per cent.

Students should be offered a better deal, leading article, page 27

Pupils need salary data for a wise choice

Analysis

For many sixth-formers, this is a time for celebration: a record number of 18-year-olds are off to university (Fraser Nelson writes). For others, it will mean anxiety as they scramble to find a university place in the clearing system. But most will not have applied and won't be taking the associated £50,000 debt. This raises a difficult question that ministers tend to shy away from: how many of those university refuseniks have made a wise choice?

The record is due to a rise in the number of 18-year-olds. The actual proportion going off to university is slightly down, especially among those from the wealthiest backgrounds. Forty-four per cent of those in the richest quintile are going to university, compared with 22 per cent of the most deprived. These figures seem to have plateaued, as students start to ask harder questions about how many university courses offer value. The idea of a "graduate premium" — long the selling point for university — was always a misleading simplification. As an average, it's real but declining: a lifetime return of about £100,000. But these figures cover a wide variety of fates: more than £30,000 for economics; £400,000 for medicine. But a typical graduate of creative arts, languages or performing arts will be lucky to see a return at all.

All told, about 20 per cent of female and 30 per cent of male graduates would be financially better off had they not gone to university at all, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies. So which are the courses to avoid? Only a redacted version of this information is released — and even that is very hard to find.

Andy Burnham recently released a video where he held a hard hat, saying it should carry the same esteem as a graduate cap. But just over half of apprenticeships are taken by over-25s; the number going to under-19s is falling. Burnham could do more to promote trade by helping people learn about the salaries involved: the typical plumber, electrician and mechanic all out-earn the average graduate until their thirties. And with no student debt.

The latest university figures show applications for engineering and technology courses are up 14 per cent, maths 5 per cent and law 5 per cent. But there are drops of a similar scale in creative and performing arts, media and humanities.

Britain has the best universities in Europe — some of the best in the world. The vast majority of those given offers yesterday can expect a superb return on their investment. But as students are beginning to work out, "going to university" is not in itself an investment strategy. It all depends on what you study, where you study it and what you could have been doing instead.

Yesterday's university offers show teens voting with their applications: towards harder subjects, more selective universities and courses with surer financial returns. But if Burnham wants to steer people towards hard hats he should release the full, comparable salary data for apprenticeships and degrees alike, so teenagers have a better idea where the best prospects lie.

Case studies

Musa Moiz
Few pupils will want to relive the memory of sitting the first of Pearson Edexcel's maths papers in June, with some describing it as a "war crime" and "crawling from the tenth circle of hell". But it was a different story for Musa Moiz, a ten-year-old from Newham in London. Musa, who lives with his parents and sister, scored 95 per cent in the exam, earning an A*.

Musa joined A-level maths classes at Harris Academy Chobham, an all-through school, and received additional lessons outside school arranged by his parents. When he is not working hard at school, Musa is much like any other ten-year-old. He loves Lego, cricket, football and playing with his friends.

His latest result builds on an extraordinary performance at GCSE last year, when he scored 95 per cent in maths and 99 per cent in further maths.

As he nears the end of primary school, Musa hopes to take an A-level in further maths next year.

Clara Burton-Dowsett
Clara Burton-Dowsett, sports captain at Roedean College, landed three A* grades despite hundreds of hours of sea swimming training before successfully crossing the English Channel at 17.

Burton-Dowsett, now 18, juggled studies in biology, chemistry and

VICKI COUCHMAN FOR THE TIMES;STEPHEN GARNETT/PA;ALISHIA ABODUNDE/GETTY IMAGES, NEIL PHILLIPS

Girls celebrate at the London Academy of Excellence in Stratford; Musa Moiz, 10, far left, got a maths A*; Emmanuel Ilegar, top left, will study electrical engineering; Clara Burton-Dowsett, left, got three A*s after swimming the Channel; Bradford pupil Oles Kuzomko, right, who fled war in Ukraine, achieved As and A*s

Boys pull further ahead in record year for maths

Nicola Woolcock, Georgia Lambert, Mary Downer, George Willoughby

Record numbers of teenagers took maths this year with the subject sat by more than 115,000 pupils and accounting for one in eight of all A-levels.

The surge in entries skewed overall grades upwards and also partly explains the stronger performance at A* of boys, who widened the gap with girls.

Experts hailed a sea change in societal attitudes towards numeracy. Sir Ian Bauckham, chief regulator of Ofqual, the exams regulator, said: "It's really striking that one in eight of all A-levels taken is now maths. Maths is turning into a success story ... People are feeling more confident, choosing maths A-level and doing well at it, and that accounts for most of the overall headline shift that we're seeing this year."

Analysis of results across England, Wales and Northern Ireland shows more subjects saw a fall in A*s awarded than a rise, compared with last year.

However, those showing an increase were sufficient to bring up the overall proportion of A*s to 9.6 per cent of all A-levels, up from 9.4 per cent last year. This is a record outside the Covid pandemic years.

Boys accounted for 63 per cent of all maths candidates and 74 per cent of those taking further maths.

The proportion of maths A-levels graded at A* was 17.7 per cent this year and for further maths it was 29 per cent.

This compares with 6 per cent for psychology, the second most popular subject, and 9.3 per cent for biology, the third.

For boys, 10.2 per cent of A-level entries were graded A* compared with 9.1 per cent of girls. Last year 9.9 per cent of entries from boys achieved this grade compared with 9.1 per cent of girls.

Girls accounted for 54 per cent of all A-level entries and achieved more overall top grades in terms of pure numbers.

Professor Alan Smithers, director of education and employment at the University of Buckingham, said the choice of subjects was the main reason for the gender gap.

There were other factors, however. "One is that boys tend to achieve better in end-of-course exams, while girls are favoured by modularisation or teacher assessment," he said.

"Another is that, in tests of ability, boys' results tend to be spread out, with more hitting the heights and more fails. While boys lead at A*, girls are ahead at all other passing grades including A."

Overall, 78.4 per cent of UK results were graded A* to C, compared with 77.9 per cent last year and 75.5 per cent in 2019. Ofqual said 7,245 18-year-olds achieved an A* grade in every subject they took and 25 of those took five or more A-levels

Other popular A-level subjects included chemistry, economics, business studies, history, physics, sociology, and art & design.

Within the top ten, the biggest percentage increase was for economics, which jumped from 10th to 5th. Art & design had the biggest fall in the top ten, down by 1.2 per cent to 42,620 entries.

English literature and languages were outside the top ten. Only 2,294 pupils took German and 6,888 sat French. Economics entries increased by 10.5 per cent to 47,157.

Myles McGinley, managing director of Cambridge OCR, one of the main exam boards, said: "Economics is surging in popularity. The pupils getting their A-level results today were born around 2008 — they are children of the financial crisis and many have been gripped by the more recent economic events that shape their world."

Entries in politics went up by 11.9 per cent, with 24,824 students taking the subject, while those taking law went up by 10.4 per cent, with 16,526 entries.

McGinley celebrated the increase in maths entries, saying: "It wasn't so long ago, we had a generation of people who were almost proud to say they couldn't do maths at all."

Iain Mansfield, head of education at the right-leaning think tank Policy Exchange, said: "It is disappointing to see the proportion of top grades awarded rising for the third year running, with this now sitting well above pre-pandemic levels. Grade inflation appears to have re-established itself as an intrinsic part of the system."

maths with her training as she wanted to raise money for the charity Taylor Made Dreams, which supports the families of very sick children in Sussex. Her choice of charity has a special meaning to her after she struggled with serious health problems as a young child. She has raised £9,455 for charity, for which she is an ambassador, by swimming the world's busiest shipping channel in 12 hours and 56 minutes.

The teenager from Crawley is heading to the University of Nottingham to study veterinary medicine and hopes to become an equine vet.

Emmanuel Ilegar
A student from Nigeria, who developed an innovative robotic arm that could potentially be used in hazardous environments, is celebrating his A-level results.

Emmanuel Ilegar, a boarder at Cardiff Sixth Form College, an independent school in Cambridge, will study electrical engineering at the University of Manchester after achieving A grades in maths and chemistry and a B in physics.

"When I arrived at Cardiff and saw projects that previous students had created, I wanted to challenge myself and build something ambitious," he said.

Ilegar and fellow students used open-source designs and a 3D printer to create the components for the arm, and he developed software for the robotic fingers to respond to human movements. "The project made me even more determined to study engineering and continue developing technologies like this," he said.

He has gained industry experience through a placement with the solar energy company Eauxell Ltd Nigeria, and he took part in the First Tech Challenge, one of the world's largest robotic competitions for young people.

After university, Ilegar hopes to pursue a career in the renewable energy sector. Originally from Lagos, he wants to improve access to electricity across Nigeria.

"My long-term goal is to work in solar energy and eventually start my own business providing affordable solar technology," Ilegar said.

Burnham's 'nerve settler' at pub before interview

Constance Kampfner
Political Correspondent

Andy Burnham confessed to having a "nerve settler" at the pub before his Cambridge interview as he battled "impostor syndrome".

A social media video posted on A-level results day showed the prime minister being surprised by Professor John Mullan, his former tutor at Fitzwilliam College, where Burnham studied English literature.

Burnham, who was persuaded to apply to the university by his school teachers in Merseyside, spoke about his anxiety on the day of the interview. "I probably shouldn't admit this to you now but I think I'd had a pre-interview nerve settler in the pub around the corner," he told Mullan, a specialist in 18th-century literature.

"I think I worried about it too much, looking back, and was too tense about it. You know, it's that impostor syndrome, isn't it? You walk in and [think], 'I shouldn't be here'," he said. "I always talk about it just to try and say to young people ... even if someone sounds a bit more confident, posher, what you've got to say is important."

Stephen Harrington, Burnham's English teacher at St Aelred's Catholic High School in Newton-Le-Willows, has said Burnham needed "a lot of persuading to apply because he felt that, as a working-class boy, going off to Cambridge wasn't for him". However, writing for The Times in June, Mullan recalled Burnham displaying considerable verbal confidence in his interview.

Burnham is the first prime minister to have completed his undergraduate degree at Cambridge since Stanley Baldwin, breaking nearly a century of Oxford-dominated premierships. He is also the first prime minister to hold an English literature degree.

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Netanyahu brands UK the 'Islamic Republic of Britain'

Gabrielle Weiniger

Binyamin Netanyahu has said that the UK is known as the "Islamic Republic of Britain", stating that Israel is at war with Iran to prevent a "second" Islamic country from obtaining nuclear weapons.

Speaking on a podcast with Avi Harush, a former military officer who lost his son in combat in Gaza, Israel's prime minister spoke about naming children after the fallen, and mentioned meeting Winston Churchill's grandson — also named Winston.

He said Churchill's grandson was a "nice man" and "lover of Israel", who viewed the Six-Day War as a "positive". The 1967 war saw Israel capture and occupy east Jerusalem and the West Bank. "Just try to find that kind of attitude in Britain now — or in what's known as 'The Islamic Republic of Britain'. You won't find it," he said.

"Someone said — you know — that the first Islamic republic with nuclear weapons will be the Islamic Republic of Britain. So, we're making sure there won't be another one like that in Iran."

His comments echoed JD Vance, vice-president of the United States, who called the UK the first "truly Islamist country that will get a nuclear weapon" at a National Conservatism Conference in 2024.

Relations between the UK and Israel have been tense over the war in Gaza and the recognition of a Palestinian state last year. Netanyahu accused Sir Keir Starmer of appeasing Hamas and has also warned in the past of the global reach of radical Islamism.

However, his comments to Harush, who previously spoke to The Times about the loss of his son Reef, mark the first time Netanyahu has accused Britain as being home to radical Islamists. The comments led to an angry response. Some on social media pointed out that Pakistan, an Islamic country, also has nuclear weapons.

The UK banned Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a threat to national security last month. The IRGC is already subject to British sanctions.

"It's like that in all of Europe," Harush replied to Netanyahu on the podcast, which was broadcast on Israel's army radio.

With the exception of a visit to Hungary in 2025, Netanyahu has not stepped foot in Europe since the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant against him over alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza. If he travels to the UK or other signatories of the Rome statute, he could face arrest.

Andy Burnham has accused Netanyahu of trying to make a two-state solution impossible as he signalled a shift in the UK's approach to the Middle East. In recent weeks he has apologised for Labour's initial response to Israel's military action in Gaza, which alienated a large section of the party and its voters, saying it had caused "huge hurt". He said the UK was "too slow to call for a ceasefire" and that the previous government "got it wrong".

Starmer had backed humanitarian pauses to allow aid to reach the Gaza Strip in the early weeks of the conflict, but stopped short of calling for a ceasefire. He was criticised for an interview he gave to LBC in the days after October 7, 2023, in which he suggested that Israel had the "right" to cut off the supply of power and water to Gaza. Starmer later clarified that he meant only that the country had a right to self-defence.

Doubts over Cambridge chief's future after scandals

Nicola Woolcock Education Editor
George Odling

The vice-chancellor of Cambridge has announced a second investigation in two days in a torrid week for the university.

The university was already under fire for its handling of a row surrounding allegations of plagiarism by Jason Arday, its youngest black professor, who resigned last week. It then lost an employment tribunal against another Cambridge academic, Professor Neil Wyn Evans, which found on Monday that the university shut down the whistleblower to protect its reputation after he raised concerns about bullying.

Cambridge had already announced an inquiry into the Arday affair and then, on Wednesday, wrote to staff saying that there would be a second review into senior academic appointments and the university's faculty of education, which had recruited him.

Professor Deborah Prentice said in the letter that Arday's appointment was an "aberration" and admitted that the case was "difficult and damaging" and had led to anger and anxiety at Cambridge.

Yesterday she published a second letter to staff, relating to both Arday and Wyn Evans. In the latest statement, Prentice said that institutional change was required to improve and modernise the university.

Prentice sought to distance herself from the dual scandals, saying she had inherited a number of complex issues when she took on the role three years ago, stressing: "These issues began before my time, but they have come to a conclusion on my watch."

However, under the vice-chancellor's regime, the university initially launched a robust defence of Arday, describing press reporting of plagiarism claims against him as a "vile smear campaign to undermine his credibility".

Prentice was also criticised in the Wyn Evans tribunal judgement for claiming to have helped draft a statement that employment judges found was solely written by the institute's registrary. The university also allowed its insurance policy to fund a professor's defence against a defamation claim brought by Wyn Evans, despite it also saying that the action was a private matter between individuals.

Academics said it was unprecedented for the vice-chancellor to release two such statements in a week and questioned whether her position was tenable. Some were also critical of the content of the latest letter, saying they believed that the vice-chancellor was using it as an excuse to curtail the powers of Regent House, the legislative and electoral body of the university made up of more than 7,000 academics, senior researchers and senior administrative staff.

In the latest letter, Prentice described Cambridge as an "extraordinary, self-governing academic community which operates via a highly devolved model in which many decisions are taken within departments, faculties, and institutions", adding: "I will use my leadership role to drive forward the required changes."

Of the Wyn Evans tribunal, she said that two senior figures would establish an independent review of "all relevant university processes" with the outcome reported directly to the university council, the university's executive body. It would operate separately from the Arday investigation but also audit human resources procedures.

One academic told The Times that the letter implied threats to the power of Regent House. They also criticised the vice-chancellor for saying she had not been in place when problems emerged, even though many of her deputies had been. The academic added: "I think they want to see much more power with the vice-chancellor and pro-vice-chancellors."

Of the events of the last fortnight, they said: "I've never seen this many people across political persuasions and disciplines so concerned and outraged."

Another described the vice-chancellor as being in a "very exposed position".

Honeytrap couple used rape drug on wealthy men

Malcolm King, top, died after Madalin Dumitru and Adina Mihai, below, drugged him with GBL to steal his Rolex

A couple who targeted men using fake sex work adverts have been jailed for 17 years (Jessica Sharkey writes).

Adina Mihai posed as a prostitute, met men at their homes and drugged them with gamma-butyrolactone (GBL) before stealing watches, jewellery, aftershave and cash with her partner, Madalin Dumitru, 30.

The defendants advertised "sexual services" from Mihai, 31, on the matchmaking site VivaStreet and targeted wealthy men. When Mihai arrived she would secretly spike their drinks to render them unconscious while Dumitru, 30, waited in their BMW. Yesterday, Oxford crown court was told that two of their four victims died.

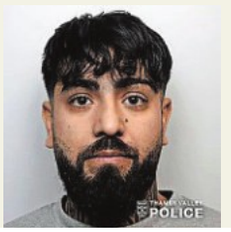
Malcolm King, 80, a retired businessman and big-game hunter, was found dead in his Cotswolds home hours after the couple visited him in August 2024. Less than a year later Gary Mouat, a company director, died after Mihai drugged him at his property in Banbury, Oxfordshire.

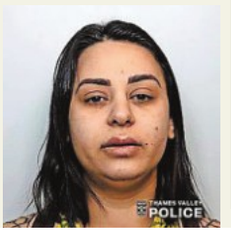
The couple, formerly of Ilford, Essex, admitted the manslaughter of King and Mouat, and two charges of unlawfully and maliciously administering poison in the form of GBL to two other men in June.

Thames Valley Police believe more men may have been targeted by the couple but may not have come forward because of embarrassment.

In a victim impact statement, Mouat's nine-year-old son said: "Why did you have to kill my dad? My heart feels so empty, sometimes it hurts so much I feel like I have to reboot it. I feel sad every day and miss him all the time."

The judge, Mrs Justice Brunner, told the defendants that their current release date is no less than two thirds of the 17-year-terms but the early prisoner release scheme "would change that to no less than half".





News Investigation

Scientology using children as

Teenagers registered as being home-schooled 'volunteer' for work spreading the word, **Tom Ball** reports

A 15-year-old boy holds two metal cylinders connected to a device that sends a small electrical current through his body. It is, in effect, a rudimentary lie detector, measuring the sweat produced in his palms when nervous. He is barefoot as tight clothing supposedly interferes with the mechanism.

"In your recent study, have you encountered any word that you did not fully understand?" his supervisor, a girl of 18, asks him. He is silent. But the device answers for him, momentarily jolting the dial and thereby revealing the gaps in his knowledge of the teachings of an American science-fiction writer.

This boy, who has short brown hair and a voice that is still breaking, does not go to school. Instead, each morning he and several other children come to this unremarkable building among the sooty stone frontages of Edinburgh's old town to spread the word of L Ron Hubbard, whose portrait hangs in every room. Known officially as the Hubbard Academy of Personal Independence (Hapi), the building on South Bridge, in the heart of the Scottish capital, is a church of Scientology.

A Times investigation has found that for the past two years the church has been engaging children as young as 13 to work alongside adults in administrative, training and recruitment roles. One teenage girl has a role that involves giving massages to adults, including male staff and members of the public. Scientology denies this.

An undercover reporter spent a week at the church under the guise of studying for a "life improvement course", and observed children working there.

The church insists they are volunteers, even though they have signed "staff contracts", which require them to work full time in exchange for desultory pay. Although referred to as staff, the church insists this does not denote employment but the "staffing of training courses" completed by "volunteers".

Upon joining "staff" they are given the job title of "Hubbard communication officer expeditor" — equivalent to a human resources role — and tasked with duties including clerical work such as sending letters and shredding documents, and more practical work such as helping to run training sessions with the public who come to the church to complete paid-for courses based on Hubbard's teaching.

Later they can train for more specialised roles. One girl, who joined staff aged 14 and is now 15, serves as a "medical liaison officer", according to one former staff member. In her role she administers massages to adult male staff and members of the public as part of a pseudo-medical practice known in Scientology as a "nerve assist".

A former senior staff member, Amir Essalhi, claimed that these "assists" took place in a locked room and unsupervised. This is denied by Scientology. After leaving the church earlier this year, Essalhi submitted a report to the police alleging forced labour of children, and exploitation of minors through inappropriate physical contact with adults. The police closed the case citing a lack of evidence.

The enrolment of children is believed to be the result of pressure from the movement's global leadership to accelerate expansion. Scientology has spent millions of dollars over recent years buying up high-value properties across the world as part of a growth strategy known as "Ideal Org".

However, many outposts have struggled to recruit enough staff and parishioners to fill these churches, according to researchers, due to a fall in believers.

In 2019 the church bought a modern office building near the Murrayfield rugby stadium with the intention of replacing the site at South Bridge. Seven years later, the building remains empty.

In an internal email seen by The Times, a senior UK church official wrote to Malcolm Fraser, executive director of Hapi, below right, complaining that the Edinburgh church still did not have the requisite number of staff with which to relocate to the Murrayfield building by 2026. The official set Fraser a target of ten more staff members in post by the end of the year and ten more in full-time training.

Scientologists believe that humans are inhabited by an eternal spirit called a "thetan" that passes from body to body through reincarnation. A child is therefore not distinct from an adult as both bodies are inhabited by a thetan that is trillions of years old.

In 1984, a High Court judgment stated that Scientology was "out to capture people, especially children and impressionable young people, and indoctrinate and brainwash them so that they become the unquestioning captives and tools of the cult".

The role of "staff members" at a church of Scientology — a legally recognised religion in the UK — differs significantly from that of a traditional church volunteer, priest or verger. More like a corporate employee, their role is to sell courses to members of the public and attract more parishioners.

There are about 25 "staff members" at Hapi, of whom four are children aged under 16. Another girl, who recently turned 16, joined "staff" when she was 14. Two other 14-year-olds attend the church daily although they are not believed to be on staff at present.

With the exception of one girl, they are all registered by their parents as home-schooled.

Three children under 16 are living apart from their parents, who are 450 miles south in East Grinstead, West Sussex, where Scientology has its UK headquarters. The others are the sons and daughters of longstanding members of the community in Scotland.

Scottish law does not require home-schooling parents to teach their children a particular curriculum nor does it stipulate that children must be taught during school hours.

But it does state that home-schooled children below the age of 16 are not allowed to be employed during standard school hours in term time. Any employer who does hire a child of that age to do any form of work must apply for a child employment permit.

In response to the Times findings, the church said "no person under the age of 16 is a member of staff at the Church of Scientology in Edinburgh". It did not respond to whether or not they had obtained a child employment permit. A spokesman said those who sign contracts, which lawyers described as "volunteering agreements", "do so entirely as volunteers". These agreements are described as "staff contracts" in internal documents.

"Naturally, children are involved in the life of places of worship in every religion present in Scotland," he said. "We are no different. Like other religions we allow some older children to help out in our church. Any volunteer participation is done within all the rules prescribed by law, and in the context of normal child safeguarding and protection policies and practices."

Lawyers for Scientology said that the document was a "volunteering agreement" and was "not a contract of employment" but a religious pledge. They added that there was no "mutuality of obligations, which is an absolute requirement for a contract of employment to exist". They said that they are not paid but are given a discretionary allowance, the processing of which through the payroll system is a matter of convenience and agreed with HMRC.

David Miscavige, Scientology's global leader, below left, addressing members at its West Sussex UK headquarters. A new

Scientology was created by Hubbard, a pulp-fiction writer from the Rocky Mountains, who in the latter half of his life turned his hand to constructing a vast and byzantine system of religious belief that draws as much on spirituality as it does on self-help, psychotherapy and science fiction.

Its foundational text is *Dianetics*, published in 1950 amid rising interest in psychoanalysis in America, which offers a do-it-yourself guide to improving mental health by revisiting traumatic memories. Hubbard later claimed that many of those who tried *Dianetics* had found themselves able to recall memories from past lives, which led to him declaring the discovery of the thetan.

Over the years, his writings on the thetan evolved into a baroque space opera involving an ancient extraterrestrial dictator called Xenu who imprisoned the thetans on Earth. The story of Xenu is revealed only to those who have ascended to the uppermost echelons of the religion, usually spending hundreds of thousands of pounds in the process.

Scientology, now run by David Miscavige, claims to have millions of followers, but researchers estimate it to have about 50,000 worldwide, including 1,844 people in Britain, according to the 2021 census, a 24 per cent decline on a decade earlier. The church retains powerful acolytes, however, including the Hollywood actors Tom Cruise, John Travolta and Elisabeth Moss.

The Times began investigating the church in Edinburgh after speaking to a former staff member who had worked as an executive at Hapi for two years before leaving Scientology last year.

Essalhi was a teenager when he first entered Scientology's orbit in late 2022. As an 18-year-old student at film school

young as 13 as full-time 'staff'

Edinburgh site, below, has sat empty since 2019 due to a lack of staff. Malcolm Fraser, below, runs Hapi in the city

he was curious about the religion that counted among its followers so many Hollywood stars.

Intrigued by the claim that Scientology is philosophy applied to real life, Essalhi was soon coming in daily, completing courses on everything from relationships to financial stability.

Then at the start of 2024 three senior members of staff, including the executive director, Fraser, returned to Edinburgh after three years training in Clearwater, Florida — Scientology's equivalent of Vatican City. Essalhi says that they brought with them a directive to rapidly increase the number of staff members at the church as part of the wider global expansion drive.

Shortly afterwards, Essalhi was asked to join staff. Within a few months he was working up to 100 hours a week, he claims, forcing him to drop out of film school.

The contracts that new staff members sign, known as an Application for Active Participation and Religious Pledge, commit them to either two and a half or five years of "actively forwarding the work of the church".

Data seen by The Times shows the maximum "wage" paid to a member of staff at the church for one week in January was £249.74. Some staff, including minors, were paid as little as £62.44.

Essalhi said that before joining Scientology he was oblivious to the bad press. However, during his time in the church he became more aware of some of the criticisms and began doing his own research. Eventually it led him to speaking with Alex Barnes-Ross, one of Scientology's foremost critics and a former member who joined the church aged 15 and left after four years.

The pair spoke on the phone several times privately before eventually Essalhi agreed to appear on Barnes-Ross's podcast, *Apostate Alex*. They had an open conversation and afterwards Essalhi thought little of it, despite being warned by Barnes-Ross that the church would look very poorly on one of its staff members speaking to a declared "suppressive person".

He was right. Over the next two weeks, Essalhi says he was subjected to repeated "interrogations" from Fraser and Scott Wordie, director of special affairs in Dublin.

As punishment he claims that he was put on "hard manual labour", working to renovate a room on the ground floor of the church that was being turned into a shop selling Scientology books. He did one day before deciding to quit.

Scientology claimed that it has been "the target of sustained anti-religious and discriminatory rhetoric" by Barnes-Ross. In response, he said that he has nothing against Scientology's s belief but is "calling for an end to their abusive practices and I welcome the day this church approaches survivors with empathy and compassion rather than attacking those who speak out".

Lawyers for the church denied that Essalhi had worked for up to 100 hours a week and claimed he worked a schedule of four days a week. They added that Essalhi had "betrayed" church staff by "engaging in covert and deceptive behaviour".

It is now several months since Essalhi left the church and he is still coming to terms with his experience. He says he considers the religion to be a "scam" that takes advantage of people's emotions.

In June Essalhi, Barnes-Ross and a group of other ex-Scientologists delivered a petition to No10 calling on the government to investigate the church over allegations of coercive control, abuse and forced labour.

What I saw when I went undercover

First person

I had heard about the "Scientology stare", but it wasn't until I spent a week undercover at the church that I experienced for myself the unnerving power of that intense and impassive gaze worn by many members of the movement (Tom Ball writes).

Posing as someone searching for a new direction, I had enrolled in a "life improvement" programme at the Hapi church in Edinburgh, enabling me to spend a week there on the course.

As a newcomer I soon came to the attention of Gillian Brown, who runs the church's public-facing department. Fixing me with an unblinking stare, she asked me a series of searching questions about myself before asking what I had read about the movement online.

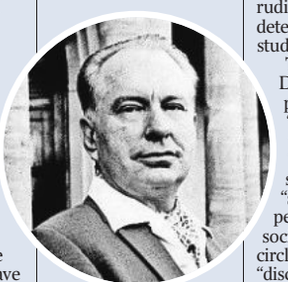
I told her that I had read that Scientology was a cult. She batted away the suggestion, saying that cults usually centre around a single messianic figure. "We don't really have that," she explained. I could have retorted by pointing out that we were sitting beneath a portrait of L Ron Hubbard, Scientology's founder, surrounded by books all written by Hubbard, in a building with Hubbard's name.

Twenty years ago Brown was studying at Edinburgh University, when one day she decided to walk into the church and take a free personality test. Her life would never be the same again.

These personality tests are for many people their gateway into the religion. Devised by Hubbard, the test involves 200 questions ranging from the generic — "Do your past failures still worry you?" — to the oddly specific, such as: "Are you opposed to the probation system for criminals?" Once I had completed the questionnaire, I was taken to a room and presented with a graph supposedly depicting my personality. It showed me to be deeply depressed, irresponsible and nervous, all of which was news to me.

It was recommended that I take a course called "Ups and Downs", one of the "life improvement" programmes offered by the church for £35.

From then on I entered a wonderland in which the rules of conventional reality ceased to apply. Over the week, I met a man who claimed he could remember past lives that he had lived trillions of years ago. I watched Brown commanding another man to repeatedly walk between two walls for over an hour. I was told that if I fully committed myself to the religion, I may one day acquire God-like mastery over time and space.



L Ron Hubbard started Scientology in 1952

Many core tenets of Scientology's spiritual belief system can be found in other major religions. But where it differs is in the claims it makes within the corporeal world.

Hubbard, who was suspicious of doctors, developed a range of pseudomedical practices within Scientology. One afternoon, John Gourlay, a former trawlerman who now serves as the church's deputy director, showed me a video which claimed that 70 per cent of illnesses could be healed by "addressing the spirit".

Gourlay later told me that he had managed to increase his IQ 17 points by using a sauna for five hours a day for several weeks, a practice known in Scientology as a "purification rundown".

I mentioned that I'd had a pain in my shoulder for several years. Gourlay suggested I try an "assist", which requires the practitioner to stroke up and down both the front and back of the patient's torso to apparently open energy flows between body and spirit. Troublingly, he then said that one of the practitioners of these assists was a 15-year-old girl. "There's various assists," he told me. "There's even one of them for how to make a drunk person sober, for example."

I was required to spend much of my time at the church in the sparsely furnished course room, which also had an "e-meter" — effectively a rudimentary lie detector — used to test students' learning.

The "Ups and Downs" coursebook presented itself as a "technology" with which to identify "potential trouble sources" and "suppressive persons" within one's social and familial circles and "disconnect" from them. I was required to read through the text and then write essays naming people in my life who would fall into this category of undesirables. The course appeared to encourage the reader to consider applying this to real life by cutting themselves off from friends and family.

I had several conversations with Brown, in which she warned me that people I knew would seek to dissuade me from joining. Despite her outwardly welcoming demeanour, I felt she was distrustful of me.

"You ask a lot of questions," she said one day with an oblique smile. "You've never worked in journalism before, have you?" I did my best to laugh off the suggestion, but was left with the feeling she had seen through me.

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Four in ten men think they could be Olympians

Poppy Koronka Health Correspondent

For every athlete who competes in the Olympics, there are many more who fail to make the cut despite their raw talent and years of dedicated training.

But that has not stopped nearly four in ten British men from believing they could qualify to compete at the 2028 Olympics if they started training today, according to a poll.

The survey of 2,000 adults found that 38 per cent of men thought they could qualify for the Games if they received professional coaching and a strict training regime. Just over a quarter of respondents believed they could beat a professional in their chosen sport, if given the chance.

Some 17 per cent thought they would have the best chance of taking part competitively in football, while 11 per cent thought tennis was their best chance of competing.

Despite 20 per cent saying they had never attempted to run 100 metres, 12 per cent of men thought they could run it in under 15 seconds.

The toughest sport to master, according to 45 per cent of all adults, would be gymnastics, while 33 per cent said diving would be the most difficult.

Nearly a quarter of those polled have been motivated to take up or resume doing a sport after watching the Olympics.

Eurig Druce, managing director at the carmaker Vauxhall, which commissioned the research to mark its partnership with Team GB, said: "With more than a quarter of adults believing they could qualify for the 2028 Olympic Games given enough time, it's clear we're a nation with considerable sporting ambition. Of course, confidence alone is not enough, as the level of dedication, training and talent showcased by Team GB's athletes proves."

In terms of general sporting ability, 38 per cent of men thought they were better than the average person, whereas 49 per cent of women believed they were worse.

A third of adults thought confidence was more important than natural talent when achieving sporting success, and 24 per cent described themselves as "quietly confident" about their own sporting ability. The research, conducted by the polling company OnePoll for Vauxhall, also found that 67 per cent of adults believed "friendly competition" made them perform better at sports.

Psychologists have named the phenomenon in which individuals have an inflated view of their capabilities the Dunning-Kruger effect. For example, a player new to tennis might believe they can serve like a professional after watching a few tutorials. This lack of self-awareness not only affects their performance but can also lead coaches to make poor decisions regarding player roles and training priorities. Research has indicated that nearly 70 per cent of unskilled individuals believe they are performing better than average, often leading to misplaced roles and resources.

A study from the National Coaching Conference found that teams with at least two overconfident players recorded a 15 per cent drop in performance metrics like win rates and efficiency.

A recent study found that men were almost twice as likely to "hit the wall" during a marathon, which researchers suspected was down to their overconfidence. The study's authors suggested that men exhibited higher tendencies towards "risk-taking behaviour", leading them to adopt an unsustainable starting pace. A YouGov survey of American adults in 2021 found that 22 per cent of men thought they could beat a chimpanzee in a fight, compared with 8 per cent of women who thought the same.

How hard can it be to win Olympic titles like Sir Chris Hoy?

TMS

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Rebel on the other side

When it comes to defying their whips, some MPs have no shame. A *Rest is Politics* discussion about former-MP Johnny Mercer's new book *No Way to Run a Country* revealed the lengths to which some Tories went to rebel during the divisive Brexit votes. One attempted to excuse himself from backing Theresa May's deal by telling the whips that he could not vote in favour because his father had told him not to. This would have been a rather weak excuse anyway, but there was something particularly wrong with it. "Your dad's dead," the whips quickly pointed out. At least the rebellious MP showed that he could think on his feet and stay on message. Rather than backtrack, he insisted: "We had a seance".

THE BIG TENT CAMP

Andy Burnham's purge of the Starmerites was efficient and brutal, but was it wise? History suggests that being gracious to a defeated faction can be useful. The Institute for Government is running a podcast series on PMs who came in mid-term, one of whom was the transient Liz Truss, below — a veritable stranger to the olive branch. "It was commonly said that Liz should have brought in more of the Rishi Sunak camp and tried to unite the party," says her former speechwriter Asa Bennett. "But she'd been clear in private that there was no reason to try and bring people into the tent who, as she'd put it, 'Thought she was shit and vice versa.'" Just goes to show that it's always valuable to have dissenting opinions as sometimes they are very right.

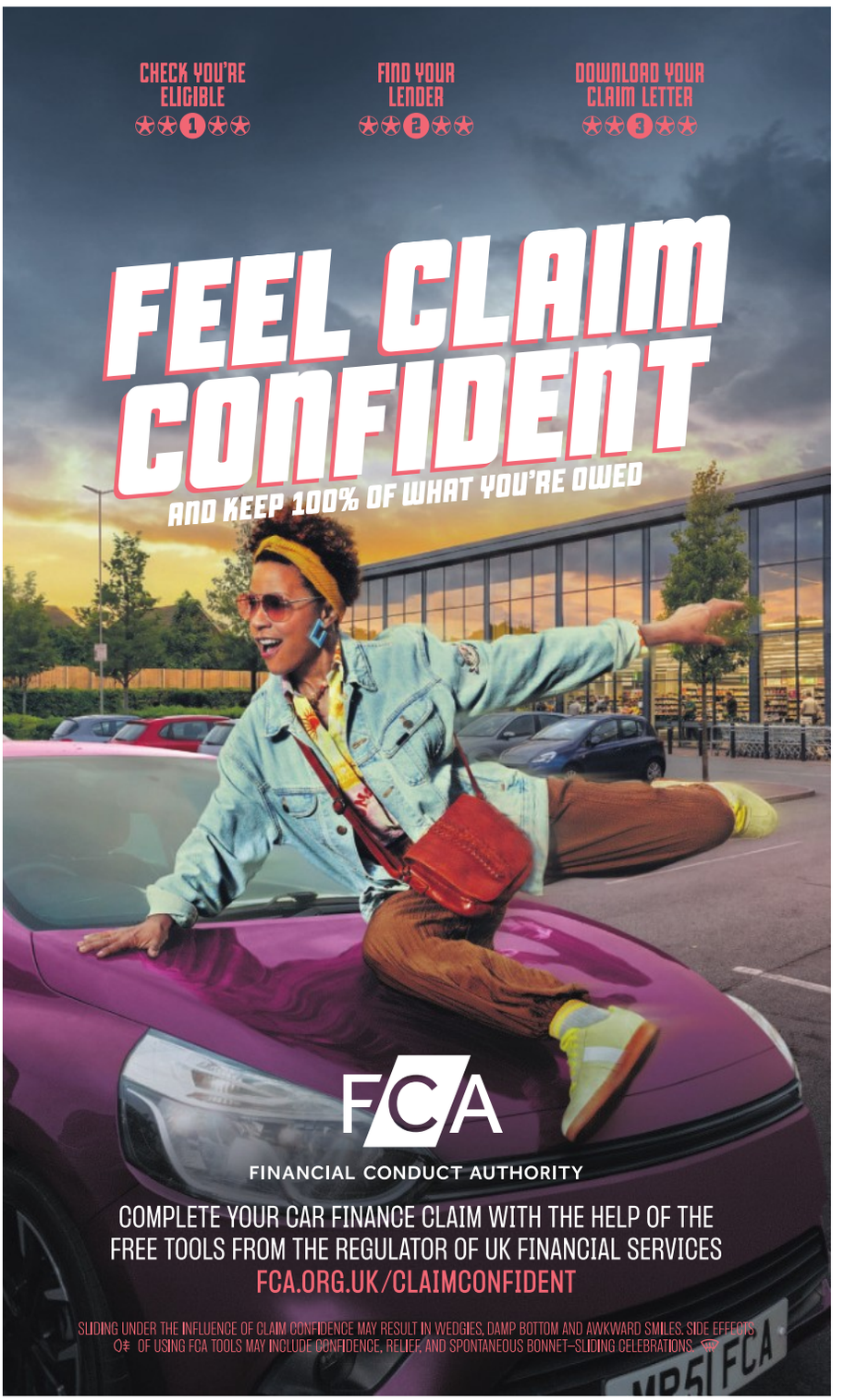
By the time many read this, we will know the result of the Clacton by-election but it's worth considering the cost of Farage's summer folly-day. Speaking to Iain Dale at the Edinburgh Fringe, the journalist Michael Crick ranted that it was "a quarter of a million to run the by-election" and then "the expense limits for the parties are greater", so we can be grateful that almost none of them took up this opportunity. Still, there's always a silver lining. The psephologist Professor Sir John Curtice pointed out that the costs in Clacton have been mitigated to the tune of about £16,000 as "there will be a record number of lost deposits".

CUT DOWN IN HIS POMP

We have been sent a little coda to our stories this week about cricket journalists being charming (John Woodcock, of *The Times*) or otherwise (EW Swanton, not of *The Times*). Dr Graham Read tells me that Swanton, who had been nicknamed Pomponius Ego, was once preparing an end of day summary for television when he took exception to a man who walked across the set wearing earphones. "Get that man orf!" Swanton bellowed, waving his arms. The man with the earphones replied: "Look mate, you do your f***ing job and I'll do mine." He was the sound engineer.

Google reported a 5,000 per cent increase in searches for "eyes hurt" after Wednesday evening's spectacular partial eclipse, but even those who used indirect methods might have suffered after-effects. As the excitement mounted in Cornwall, a wag was overheard offering a warning to those who were using a colander to project an image of the phenomenon. "Be careful," they said. "A sieve is the best implement for straining your eyes."

JACK BLACKBURN



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News

Fifth of electric car owners have been stranded by a flat battery

Andrew Ellson
Consumer Affairs Correspondent

Nearly one in five electric car owners have been left stranded in the past year after their vehicle's battery ran out, according to a survey of drivers.

However, concerns about electric vehicles were significantly greater among drivers of petrol and diesel cars than among those who own one, suggesting the scepticism surrounding battery-powered cars may be more pronounced than owners' experience warrants.

In a survey of nearly 2,000 motorists — half of them drivers of electric vehicles and half drivers of petrol or diesel engines — 18.5 per cent of electric car owners said they had been left stranded in the past year because their vehicle's battery ran out.

One in four said a lack of access to charging had stopped them taking a trip over the past 12 months and a similar proportion had been unable to charge their car at some stage because of a shortage of public charging points.

The findings, from research commissioned by the charging network Be.EV, highlight continuing reservations about electric motoring even among people who have made the switch. Only two in five electric car owners agreed that electric vehicles were capable of making long journeys, while fewer than a third said that there were enough public chargers near their home.

More strikingly, fewer than half (43 per cent) of electric car owners said their next car was likely to be electric.

Drivers' concerns about electric vehicles were particularly evident around holidays. Two in five electric car owners said they would feel confident taking their vehicle on a long road trip. Fewer still said they would be confident about driving through mainland Europe.

Yet the research also found a pronounced gap between the attitudes of electric car owners and motorists who had not made the switch. Only one in ten (12 per cent) of petrol or diesel car drivers believed electric cars were capable of long journeys, compared with two in five (40 per cent) of those who owned one. Petrol and diesel drivers also had greater concerns about the lack of public chargers.

The differences suggest that although electric car owners have significant reservations about the technology, motorists without direct experience view them considerably more negatively. Manufacturers say many of the most popular new electric cars can comfortably cover 400 miles on a single charge.

There are also signs that attitudes may be changing as petrol and diesel costs rise. One in six petrol and diesel drivers said higher fuel prices had prompted them to consider buying an electric vehicle. Almost one in four said their next car was likely to be electric.

While manufacturers and the government are trying to accelerate the transition away from petrol and diesel, the survey found some resistance to the change. More than one in four petrol and diesel drivers said electric vehicles were being forced upon people. Intriguingly, electric car owners (15 per cent) were more likely than other motorists (11 per cent) to say concerns about man-made climate change were overblown.

"It is clear there are still perception issues with regards to charging in the UK," said Asif Ghafoor, chief executive of Be.EV. "But these hurdles to electric car ownership exist mostly in people's minds. There are over 121,000 public chargers in the UK. A large majority of those only get used 10 to 15 per cent of the day. The idea that there isn't enough charging availability is slightly absurd."

TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER JAMES GLOSSOP

Big picture Hugh Miller, a North Yorkshire-based artist, works on an oil landscape in the heather above Leighton Reservoir

Amnesty attack on women's groups 'no isolated error'

Sanchez Manning

Gender-critical campaigners have rejected Amnesty International UK's claim that a report condemning them as "anti-rights" was an "isolated" error.

The briefing uploaded to the charity's website, which was later withdrawn, mentioned the sex-based rights group Sex Matters and Beira's Place — a centre for victims of sexual violence co-founded by the author JK Rowling.

After threats of legal action from the *Harry Potter* author, Kerry Moscogiuri, the chief executive of Amnesty International UK, issued a public apology and claimed that the repor did not reflect its position as an institution.

She said that Amnesty "regretted" publishing the briefing, which branded gender-critical activists an "anti-rights movement" and a "growing threat".

However, Sex Matters wrote to the human rights charity yesterday, saying that it did not accept that the report's publication was "an isolated failure of quality control". The letter, seen by The Times, also rejected the suggestion that the negative view expressed against gender-critical groups in the briefing was not Amnesty's institutional position.

It went on to argue that Amnesty has "repeatedly" claimed that "women's rights" must include the interests of transgender women who were born male. The correspondence further alleged that the charity has previously promoted puberty blocking treatment for children with gender dysphoria, now banned by the government.

Amnesty International UK said in a statement: "Amnesty International UK holds itself to the highest standards of research, evidence and editorial oversight. This briefing did not meet those standards.

"We remain deeply committed to defending the rights of women and girls, and to supporting the trans community in the UK as their rights, dignity, and safety come under sustained attack."

Author's brush with evil is far from banal

Theatre Clive Davis

Mrs Stern Wanders the Prussian State Library
Traverse, Edinburgh (80min)
★★★★☆

The timing is propitious. Jenny Lyn Bader's off-Broadway play about Hannah Arendt arrives in Edinburgh just as a new biography of the German-born author of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* arrives in bookshops.

Arendt is best known today for coining the phrase "the banality of evil" in her book about the Adolf Eichmann trial. In Bader's pensive drama we see the youthful scholar, then married to a pupil of Heidegger, experiencing her own close encounter with the forces of authoritarianism.

In 1933 she was taken into custody after a librarian at the Prussian State Library denounced her. In this chamber piece from the American company Luna Stage, Bader takes us inside the cell where Arendt is interrogated by a junior Gestapo official, Karl Frick. Ella Kaille delivers a convincingly punctilious portrayal of a scholar who knows that any slip of the tongue about her connection to dissidents and Zionist activists could prove disastrous. Clipped and formal, she soon recognises that there is a chance that she can win her inquisitor's sympathy.

Brett Temple's Frick is no leather-coated brute but a young man who has just made the transition from the civilian police. His demeanour is that of an ordinary public servant hoping to make his way in the world. There is a layer of ambivalence and more than a flicker of humanity in his conversation. We are, Bader reminds us, peering into a world where millions of ordinary people still have a chance to make a choice between good and evil.

Brett Temple's Karl Frick interrogates Hannah Arendt, played by Ella Kaille

The director Ari Laura Kreith oversees a dramatised debate that will appeal to anyone who enjoyed Michael Frayn's atomic bomb drama *Copenhagen*. Leo Strauss's name flits past and Arendt invokes Kant as she makes a passionate defence of the quest for truth. Drew Hirshfield (who will be replaced from August 18 by Daniel Adam Cantor) makes a brief appearance as a Jewish lawyer trying to come to the aid of the detainee.

Arendt, pacing the room, pulling on a cigarette, calculates her every move. Frick seems to warm to her, yet she knows that if she loses her balance, she risks disappearing into the abyss.

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Admit it Charles, Buckingham Palace is hideous
Emma Duncan
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Comment

Burnham v Middle England is just the start

PM said he would stop dumping asylum seekers in poorer areas but only stopping the boats can save him from backlash

Patrick Maguire

@PATRICKKMAGUIRE

Ronald Reagan's nine most terrifying words in the English language are quoted so often that we need not repeat them here. But which nine words, in 2026, are the British equivalent? Perhaps these: "I'm from the council. Next door's becoming an HMO." Or maybe these: "We're housing asylum seekers in the old RAF base." For this, after all, is now the uncomfortable stuff of politics in so much of provincial England.

So the prime minister was reminded earlier this week. On Tuesday, Andy Burnham went to Ilkeston in Derbyshire. That town once gave England coal and bricks and tiles and iron, as well as Robert Lindsay, but today — like so many of this country's stilled cradles of industry — it makes little more than boxfuls of votes for Reform UK. Hence why Burnham went there: to listen to the voters who think Labour has nothing to say.

Two of those conversations, both recorded, cast a harsh light indeed on the great dividing line of English politics and the frontier the prime minister sees between two very different Englands. One was in the street, where a local asked Burnham what he would do about small boats. Look at the numbers! More than 200 on a single dinghy! The man got a polite, expansive and unpatronising answer from one of the prime minister's advisers, who told him Burnham had just spoken at length to GB News on that very subject.

It was an interesting interview, for the questions as much as the answers. They were in post-industrial Derbyshire, yes, but Burnham was asked about an Oxfordshire village called Piddington. The Times visited this week, and found its 350 residents driven to rage, fear and anxiety over plans to house 1,250 asylum seekers in a disused Ministry of Defence depot nearby. So much so that 96 per cent of the villagers voted to secede from the UK in a local referendum held last month.

What would the prime minister do for the people of Piddington? They'd written to him, GB News explained. One of them, a boy of seven named Rex Perkin, said — a little quaintly — that the new neighbours would "overwhelm the hamlet". He liked his playing field just the way it was. Villagers who spoke to this newspaper earlier this week said much the same. They didn't want 1,000 or more unoccupied, unfamiliar men

> In a speech as MP for Makerfield he vowed to abolish 'HMO Britain'

descending on Piddington, loitering and drinking on that same field, scaring women who would otherwise leave their doors unlocked.

Few ever disagree — not when it's them. The same complaints ring out from Linton-on-Ouse in North Yorkshire, another pretty village whose former RAF base has been earmarked for the same purpose. When he was asked about Piddington, Burnham promised to listen to its "good people", as he always does. But, he added: "We cannot have a situation where it's only the poorest communities in the country that receive all of the dispersal of refugees and asylum seekers. I do believe all parts of the country need to work, to play their part."

And there it was, again: the prime minister's world view in microcosm. It was in his very first speech as MP for Makerfield, and again in Ilkeston, that he promised to abolish "HMO Britain". One can translate that very succinctly, and indeed it will have been widely understood. The simple English version is this: accommodating asylum seekers in houses converted to bedsits in the residential streets of towns like Ashton or Abram or Bryn is unfair on everyone, not least the local community, and has to end. It is a popular, unarguable proposition, easily and immediately intelligible to the people in question.

But there's more to it. HMO Britain isn't Piddington. It's Blackpool, Burnley or indeed Thetford, where riots broke out last week — each house a little monument to the ills Burnham diagnoses in the country and its economy. Such places are poorer and their housing stock is cheap. Spiv landlords take their opportunity, outsourcers take the money from local authorities with precious little of it to spare, locals already distrustful of and disenchanted with politics have no option but to take change, crime, rough sleeping and antisocial behaviour on the chin. Migrants often take the force of the backlash too. Nobody asked them. Nobody's listening. And someone else is getting rich.

This failsafe prescription for resentment, or worse, is applied again and again to the places Burnham wants to win back around to Labour. Towns done over again and again, as he said of Leigh in his maiden speech 25 years ago, by forces beyond their control and

Protests near Thetford, Norfolk, where violence broke out over asylum seekers

impervious to their democratic will. But, as they'd tell you in Piddington, Middle England doesn't much like it either. Rather a lot of Labour voters happen to live there these days.

Fairness, another favourite word of Burnham's, necessarily means redress — and losers. New Labour could afford to redistribute cash towards Labour's England. For now, when it comes to migration, this prime minister can only propose to redistribute pain and discomfort away from it, to be felt with just as much intensity elsewhere.

It is hardly surprising. HMO Britain is Burnham's Britain, in which the assumed order of life is upended by government policy imposed from afar. Remember, though, what the man in Ilkeston said. He first wanted to know what the prime minister would do about small boat crossings, not what happened once their passengers landed on the south coast. Accordingly, Burnham starts from the premise that numbers should continue to fall, which they are — including in asylum accommodation. Hence why, after a brief flurry of speculation to the contrary, he voted for Shabana Mahmood's Asylum Bill as a born-again backbencher last month and then kept her in post as home secretary. Redistribution is not his long-term solution.

Mahmood's plan, and the prime minister's too, is to move asylum seekers to larger sites like those military bases, where services can be provided within their confines. In time she intends to move beyond the question of whether rich or poor must shoulder the burden at all. The Home Office is examining whether disused, more isolated industrial facilities can also be repurposed so that far fewer people — wherever they are — feel an imposition on their doorstep. The same logic lay behind the closure of asylum hotels.

Burnham speaks of "compassion and control". That he can express the former for those here legally is not in question. In Ilkeston, when the cameras were off, Burnham was approached by a carer from abroad. She had heard him pay tribute to overseas workers in his speech on social care. She thanked him for saying so. She felt seen, heard, appreciated. He wants the unhappy and unwilling residents of HMO Britain to feel the same. Taking back control from the landlords, the outsourcers, the people smugglers and the furious retirees of chocolate box villages is a far more trying test.

We know his diagnosis. As it is with early release, his premiership, Labour's future and trust in politics is all riding on a prime ministerial cure.

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Comment

Admit it Charles, Buckingham Palace is hideous

A trip to monarchy HQ is a traipse through irredeemable naffness — can't we just repurpose it?

Emma Duncan

My sister has been staying with me on a visit from South Africa, so I thought I would show her a good time. The high point in our schedule was Buckingham Palace. At £33 a ticket it's a relatively pricey outing, but I thought it would be worth it to treat her to some splendour.

How wrong I was. From the bushes of artificial box in plaster urns that greet you as you pass through security onwards, Buckingham Palace is irredeemably naff.

That's not entirely the fault of the current management. The palace was redesigned by John Nash in an era when opulence signified power, not vulgarity. Happily, gold, marble, mirrors, columns and huge portraits of oneself and one's relations are out of fashion, although the aesthetic survives among potentates in the Middle East, Central Asia and Washington DC. Peter York, the cultural commentator, describes it as dictator chic.

But while you can't turn a rococo palace into a minimalist gallery, you make choices about what to display; and the choices made at the palace are, to my mind, mostly poor ones.

A few square yards of the crimson-flock-wallpapered throne room helps to illustrate them. A gilt clock surmounted by a statue of Atlas with a globe stands awkwardly in front of mirrored doors with gilt surrounds. Beside them is an armchair upholstered in red velvet with gilt lions' heads for arms, next to which is a gilt fireplace with aggressive gilt firedogs in the shape of dragons. On the mantelpiece is a vast gilt mirror topped with a crown, and a black marble and gilt clock decorated with warriors, on either side of which are gilt candelabras. If I owned any of that, I'd stick it in the attic.

The gilded tat drowns out the lovely things, such as John Copley's portrait of three of George III's daughters playing together. But the

> 'Blue' drawing room is like being trapped in a box of Quality Street

King evidently favours overload. The paintings in the recently rehung Picture Gallery, which has some stonkingly good works, are jammed together from the dado rail to the ceiling. Even if you crick your neck right back you can barely tell a Canaletto from a Stubbs on the top row, so the only point can be to show off how much of the good stuff one has.

The contemporary art is mostly execrable. In a series of paintings in a corridor, carriages and uniforms are just about discernible beneath a lot of black scribbles. As we stared in mute horror, others were more vocal: "Just horrible"; "A three-year-old coulda done it"; "Quelle horreur". The King's coronation portrait makes him look like an octogenarian accountant of restricted stature who has draped a curtain round his shoulders. Jonathan Yeo's strangely red portrait of him with weird hands is hung on red flock wallpaper, opposite John Russell's delicately funny 1791 depiction of Prinny in his fat prime. Neither choice does the contemporary picture any favours.

And then there are the colours. The "blue" drawing room has grey-green flock walls, a red carpet, brown marbled columns, a gold and white ceiling, turquoise chairs and black sideboards. It's like being trapped in a box of Quality Street.

Things didn't improve outside. Buckingham Palace's garden is nearly as big as St James's Park, but while the latter is an oasis of shade and water that welcomes the weary, the former is dominated by a vast lawn on to which hoi polloi may not step. A tarmac path funnels them round the lawn to a huge gift shop, where a pair of dishcloths with the royal logo in gold retails for £24.

It is all, I'm afraid to say, horribly common. Perhaps it's because the royals have no taste but, being arrogant, don't realise it. That's Diana Athill's line on the upper classes. In her wonderful memoir, *Instead of a Letter*, she explains that the lovely things she was brought up with were all bought by her ancestors. Anything recently purchased was "a pitiful, decadent bastard of the old ... Only a few members of my family had, if left to themselves, more natural taste than the people they most pitied and despised: the dwellers in suburbia."

Perhaps the royals have decent taste but think that the vulgus wants vulgar things. From the rip-off prices and the overcrowded rooms to the ban on photography, the place has the joyless air of a business that doesn't respect its customers.

Or maybe the problem is not the royals but the nation. The British are inclined to preserve the past without giving enough thought to the needs of the present. That's the instinct that makes our planning system so inflexible and hobbles our economy.

It's not that we can't do good design. After the palace, my sister and I went to Waitrose, where the despised suburbanites shop: everything, down to the wooden waste bins, was beautifully done. But we have an excessive reverence for our history, and are unwilling to combine the contemporary with the historic in the way that the Europeans do. The Dutch royals' Paleis Het Loo, for instance, is a baroque wonder with a stunning contemporary underground extension where past and present complement each other.

The King runs Buckingham Palace but he doesn't live there any more, and he doesn't own it. We do. I was always told that you shouldn't own things that aren't either beautiful or useful, so if the King can't make it beautiful, let's do something useful with it, like turning it into a data centre or perhaps, given our current needs, a prison.

THUNDERER

Surge pricing for public loos is a new low from councils

Charlotte Lytton

Ask what people want from their public lavatory experience and "dynamism" is unlikely to top the list. Yet in Sefton and the Cotswolds there may soon be no choice. Those councils have been consulting on using real-time data to enable dynamic pricing for public lavatories, in order to charge more during busy periods. Of the depths first-world countries can sink to, ratcheting up the costs for a basic human right is surely at the bottom.

These added fees would be embarrassing in any prosperous country, but feel particularly acute in England, where public loos are already a national disgrace. Earlier this year, the Royal Society for Public Health warned that there was a "significant shortfall" in provision in England, where there are 15,481 people to every public lavatory — down 14 per cent over a decade. Of those that remain, many happily continue to charge despite being filthy or barely functional.

Other countries' facilities add insult to injury. Take New Zealand, where no matter the small town you're in, there will be a perfectly clean, free-to-use public bathroom available, often playing a jaunty soundtrack; even in the US, a country that would charge for breathing if it could, you can use the loo for free at a petrol station.

Here, there is no such luck. Most people — largely women with children, the elderly, or less able — are forced to have an encyclopaedic knowledge of every pub and café loo within a five-mile radius.

You can see the logic today's status quo sprang from: few public loos means people are forced into spending in private businesses, in order to use theirs. And now, having perhaps inadvertently created this golden goose, councils want back in, and are willing to install top-notch monitoring technology to ensure they get a cut. Who cares about the potential infections caused by holding it in when you can make an extra quid from an octogenarian needing an urgent bathroom trip?

In April, almost all local authorities in England increased council tax by 5 per cent. Somehow, this has not only failed to cover the cost of the odd visit to a public loo but has inspired some councils to dabble in surge pricing. The Bank of England reports this will be experimented with by 31 per cent of businesses this year — a model that is now being used to fleece us at pubs and on groceries, cabs, air fares and more.

Worse still is what follows. Dynamic pricing for prescriptions? Inflated fees for water on warm days? Surge fares on A&E beds? This Uber-isation of our existence — figuratively, at least — is as low as it gets.

Charlotte Lytton is a freelance writer

Mike Atherton Notebook

Manchester's booming but try telling the suburbs that

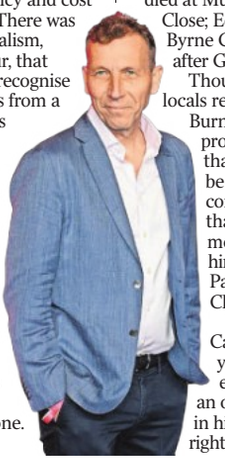
Wandering through Manchester's Northern Quarter on a warm summer's evening, through Stevenson Square and along the pedestrianised Thomas Street, it was impossible not to be taken with the extraordinary vitality coursing through an area that was once a deserted post-industrial wasteland.

For those of us who grew up in the city in the 1980s, the transformation has been remarkable. Forty years ago, it was a place locals passed through on the way to work. The suburbs were king. Now, the factories have been turned into warehouse apartments and high rises have rendered the city centre unrecognisable. Manchester city centre's population has grown to around 100,000 and the economy has risen much more quickly than other areas of the country.

"Manchesterism" has been a hot topic lately, though the danger is that the wrong lessons get learnt. A long-term vision, a stable and capable managerial class and a willingness to put ideology to one side in order to — in the great northern tradition — get things done have been the key. But what of the peripheries? Heading out on my old route from school (the No 76 bus), the shiny feel of the city soon fades. Ancoats, Miles Platting, Newton Heath and Failsworth don't look as though they have benefited from much trickle-down effect. In Newton Heath, two thirds of school age children come from low-income families, which puts the area among the most deprived in the country.

Those I spoke to on my most recent trip offered a mixed message. There was praise for the efficiency and cost of the transport system. There was also the kind of bleak fatalism, tinged with black humour, that those from the area will recognise all too readily, and comes from a feeling that not much has changed — though Manchester city council has approved a ten-year plan to regenerate Newton Heath.

I was there on the weekend of the mayoral elections. In the working men's club that doubled as the polling station, I asked two middle-aged men dressed in football shirts how they voted. They laughed: "United," said one. "City," said the other.



A city unmatched

Manchester is a football city. The greatest of all football clubs began life in the area as Newton Heath Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Football Club at what was then North Road, before moving to Bank Street, Clayton, in 1893. A plaque commemorates Manchester United's early days at the second of those sites.

All around are reminders of these links. Just off Old Church Street, the main thoroughfare through Newton Heath, are a cluster of streets named after some of the Busby Babes who died at Munich: Tommy Taylor Close; Eddie Colman Close; Roger Byrne Close and walks named after Geoff Bent and David Pegg.

Though he's an Evertonian, locals recognise in Andy Burnham a politician who is a proper football man, rather than one who pretends to be so to demonstrate their common touch. He says that, outside family, the most important things to him are Everton, the Labour Party and the Catholic Church — in that order.

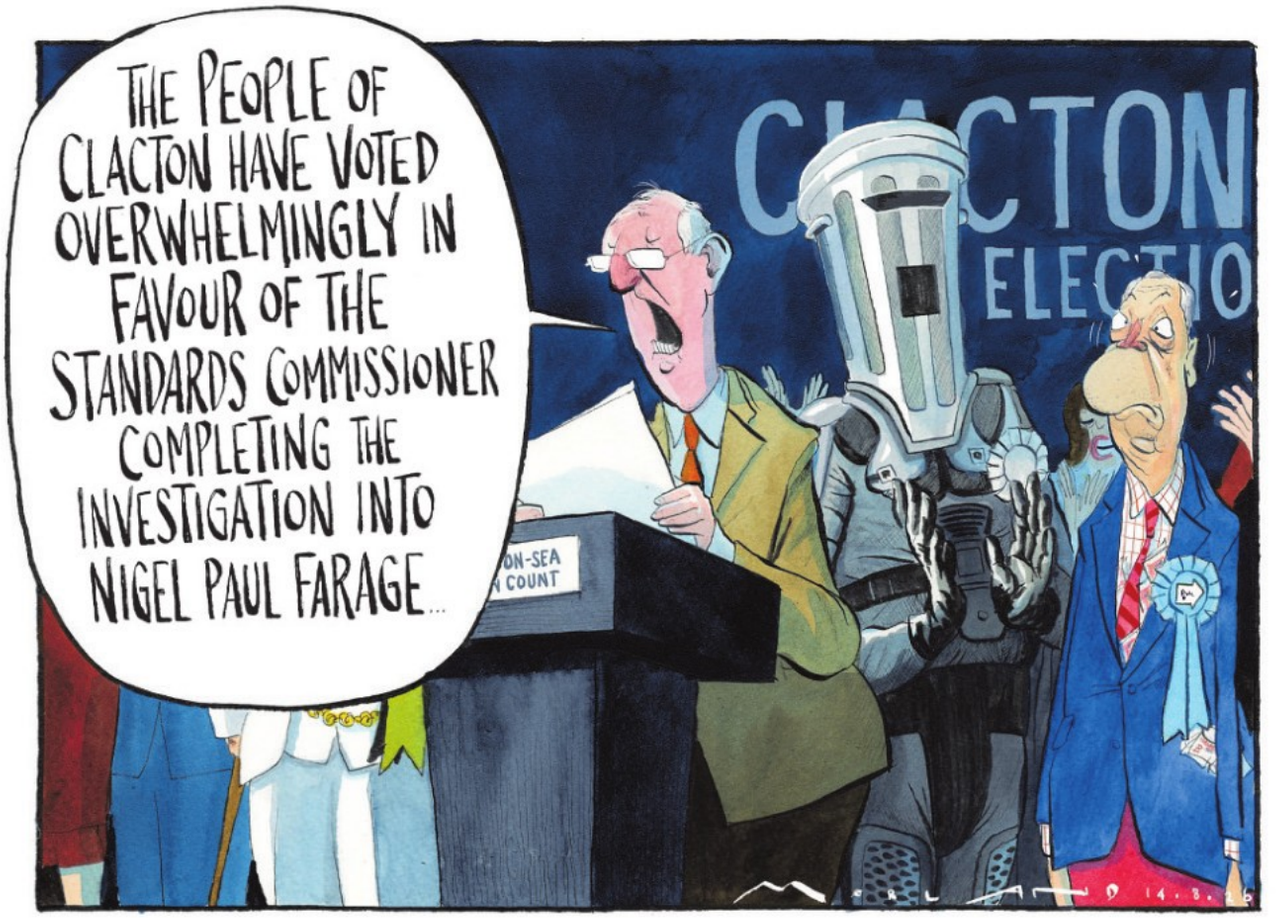
We crossed over at Cambridge University by a year, and played against each other in a cup match, an occasion he remembered in his book *Head North*. He rightly remembered my own ineptitude at full-back and the own goal I scored that cost us the game. On the pitch, he was a trier.

Evans above

One of The Sunday Times's greatest campaigning editors came from Newton Heath/Failsworth. Sir Harold Evans, plain old Harry as was, grew up in a small terrace on Ashworth Street, just off the route the No 76 takes.

His mum had an entrepreneurial streak. She began by selling lemonade to passers-by; then ice-cream, until finally their parlour morphed into a full-scale corner shop, selling groceries and haberdasheries. She did this while raising four children, and her husband helped once his train-driving shifts ended. Evans's dad was a bright man, with a head for numbers, who had little formal education, while his father's father had none. In a moving passage in his autobiography, Evans tells of visiting his dad when editor of this newspaper in 1981, to be told: "What would people say if they knew the man editing this newspaper is the grandson of a man who could not read a word of it?"

His triumph was one of education, principally. He had the good fortune his dad and grandad did not have. I walked down Ashworth Street recently and No 54, the Evans's house, still boasts a grocery store. A plaque, a nod to Evans's work and the spirit of his parents, would be fitting — both for him and Newton Heath.



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Trump's Air Force run was plane embarrassing

Symbolism of a president dodging the risk of enemy fire during an unpopular war with Iran will reinforce public distaste

Gerard Baker

@GERARDTBAKER

Even by the standards of the exaggerated self-esteem in which American journalists view their role, the White House press corps is in a class of its own. A job covering the president is still regarded by most budding US journalists as the pinnacle of a career in the news business.

Those from the major news organisations get their own seat assignment in the White House briefing room, the name of the newspaper, website or TV network affixed to the seatback. They travel with the president when he goes on exotic foreign trips. They labour long and hard to develop the kind of deep-throat sources in the administration they hope will one day earn them a scoop that will be memorialised by some future Robert Redford or Dustin Hoffman in the imagined movie of their lives.

So you can imagine the jolt they got this week when they discovered that their job description had been extended to playing the role of human decoys for a potentially lethal attack intended for President Trump.

The Washington Post reported on an elaborate ruse conducted by the US secret service as Trump was concluding his visit to Turkey for the Nato summit meeting last month. US intelligence officials had received indications of a terrorist threat to Trump while he was in Turkey, and there were reports of Iranian proxy terrorists armed with heavy weapons in the vicinity of the president's whereabouts in Ankara.

The risk was serious, his security advisers decided, and Air Force One — both the new Qatari gift-plane, and the original — was too inviting a target for the enemy. They decided to transfer the president undercover to a different plane for the journey home, in secret.

TV pictures later showed Trump boarding the old Air Force One plane at Ankara airport, but then, unseen by the cameras and unbeknown to all but a few officials, he immediately passed through the plane's cabin and got into a catering unit — the sort that is used to convey inflight meals for airlines — raised to the door at the other side. Trump climbed into the container, which was lowered on to a waiting truck, and he was then transported a few hundred yards to another, smaller aircraft, an air force C32-A jet with a small group of aides for the onward leg back to the US.

The unsuspecting press then boarded what they thought was Air Force One (by protocol, the call sign belongs to any plane the president is actually travelling in) and never knew that the president was not with them. Nor, more importantly did they know the reason for the switch — that they had been left on a plane US officials believed might be at risk of being shot down.

Indignation followed the Post's story this week. "That the White House would lie to the press corps in its entirety about where the president is ... That's a new Rubicon that's being crossed," said Garrett Graff, a prominent member of the Washington press priesthood.

> Journalists found themselves playing the role of human decoys

Lying to the press? Count us shocked. Still, even given Trump's low regard for those he calls "enemies of the people", using them as expendable distractions for a surface to air missile so that he could get home safely was a new one.

Almost overlooked in the self-righteous fuming by the reporters, though, was the fact that they weren't alone in playing their part in this remarkable tableau of subterfuge. Also on board the decoy plane were White House staff members and cabinet officials, including Marco Rubio, the secretary of state, and Scott Bessent, the Treasury secretary, respectively fourth and fifth in line to the presidency should anything happen to the commander-in-chief.

Everyone, of course, made it home safely, whichever plane they flew, and perhaps the melodrama was overdone. After all, it wasn't the first time a president has used deception to travel in cases of credible threats. Both Bill Clinton and George W Bush deployed top-secret subterfuge on occasions — though in their cases a small handful of reporters were notified, and no one else seems to have been put in potential harm's way.

It's doubtful that anyone other than a few journalists are upset about this. Americans understand that operational security prioritises the president — and presidents generally do what they are advised. The unusual story, however, may only serve to emphasise Trump's current woes. The symbolism of a president literally dodging the risk of enemy fire during an unpopular war will only reinforce the public's distaste for his foreign policy.

Perhaps to compensate for his evident irresolution in his war with Iran, Trump has done his best to present the image of a resolute leader in the past few weeks. As he vacillates over escalation, de-escalation or stalemate with Iran by day, by night his excursions on Truth Social have produced some striking images of him posing in martial style. One last week featured him in full army dress striding out with Second World War real-life heroes, generals George Patton and Douglas MacArthur.

The Air Force One caper has invited an avalanche of ridicule in response. It may not have been quite as arresting or demeaning as the spectacle of Boris Johnson hiding in a refrigerator to avoid a television interviewer. But it has led to a slew of social media counterprogramming from his critics, including AI images of the president skulking in airline food carts amid the packets of pretzels and tin foil dishes of chicken and beef.

However prudent the move, the idea of a president being smuggled on and off an aircraft to avoid being assassinated by the enemy is not one to lift the heart of most Americans. Six months after he launched a war he insisted would be over in days, it will only reinforce the sense that Trump has got himself into a mess from which escape seems either impossible or humiliating.

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Letters to the Editor should be sent to letters@thetimes.co.uk or by post to 1 London Bridge Street, London SE1 9GF

Prisoner releases

Sir, The solution to the controversy surrounding the early release of prisoners (letters, Aug 12) would be for all sentences to mean what they say. Headline sentences, few of which will be served in full, have increased to assuage populist sentiment. That is countered to some extent by early release, with the resulting mess as that sentiment re-emerges, as in the Harper case. If a fraudster is deemed as worthy of a ten-year term as a rapist, then they should both serve the same. Making the rapist serve longer shows that the initial determination was wrong, and perhaps he should have received 15 years. There may be variants in proportions of sentences served but they should be restricted to matters not known to the sentencing judge, such as conduct in prison and the level of danger posed when release is being considered, but not the nature of the offence.
Richard Colbey
Barrister, 5 Pump Court, Temple

Sir, Early release or time served is not the problem, because the offenders will eventually return to their community, to the concern of victims and witnesses. Some years ago one of our regular attenders in the Cheltenham youth court was accused of pinning the hands of a youth while others stabbed the victim in the stomach. At Gloucester crown court, the evidence was contested and he was acquitted. Clearly the community thought otherwise and friends of the family visited the lad and explained the situation: "Go — or else." In Tudor terms it amounted to banishment. The Probation Service found him a spot some way away. He stayed away from Cheltenham and, cut off from his mates, his offending declined.

Where the courts, the tariff and jail had failed, banishment worked. The real gain was for the community: the victim's family could move on, the witnesses no longer feared dark alleys and, perhaps, he too gained.
Kim Brassington, JP (ret'd)
Brockhampton, Glos

Corrections and clarifications

● We said that Tony Gair, a Green Party candidate for South Tyneside council, had removed social media posts supporting Vladimir Putin and accusing Theresa May of orchestrating the novichok attack on Sergei Skripal. Mr Gair has informed us that he did not remove the posts but merely set his X account to private for a few months. He has also pointed out that his novichok post was published on March 15, 2018, not May 15 as we wrongly said. We are happy to put the record straight.

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Unrest over Burnham's zero-hours reform

Sir, Regarding your article on the potential impact of the zero-hours contracts ban, it's not just young people who would be disproportionately put out of work ("Firms' fury at zero-hours reform", news, Aug 13). An end to the flexibility that zero-hours contracts provide could mean other groups feel forced to leave their jobs and possibly the employment pool entirely.

A huge number of researchers and survey interviewers are employed on — and benefit from — flexible-worker contracts in the market and social research sector. The present terms for these contracts give people the power to choose which projects they pick up and to control when, where and how much they work. Many of them are parents of young children or have caring responsibilities for other relatives, and their employment needs to fit around those obligations. If we ban this way of working outright we risk losing a large group of experienced people, predominantly women, from the workforce — at a time when the government needs more tax revenues.

It is right to challenge "exploitative" contracts. However, the legislation must account for the very legitimate flexible models that support employment for so many people and provide cost-effective research for businesses and the public sector.
Jane Frost
CEO, Market Research Society

Sir, Your report on the £3 billion potential cost of reforms to zero-hours contracts focuses on hospitality. Regional theatres will be hit even harder. For front-of-house staff, hours follow the performance schedule. When a theatre is dark, there are no audiences, no box office income and often no work to offer. Yet these roles provide valuable, flexible employment for many young people balancing study, auditions, and other work. A rigid guarantee of hours risks reducing those opportunities rather than improving them.

Many regional theatres are publicly owned and charity-run, and already face higher employer national insurance, rising wages and energy costs, and reduced business-rates support. Requiring them to guarantee hours when no work exists will not create greater security. It will mean fewer jobs, less ambitious programming, and still greater pressure on already fragile finances.

The government should distinguish between exploitative zero-hours practices and genuinely irregular work. For theatres, any guarantee should reflect the hours actually available, rather than an historical average bearing little relationship to how they operate.
Patrick Gracey
Theatre Producer, London W6

Sir, Regarding the bleating about the prohibition of zero-hours contracts, these are a form of exploitation of poor people by incompetent employers. Good riddance to a bad and underhand practice.
Terance Hart
Cambridge

Sir, The best protection for workers is a thriving economy in which there is a realistic option to choose to rapidly move to another employer if the pay and conditions are unsatisfactory.
Paul Ridley
Stoke on Trent

Letters to The Times must be exclusive and may be edited. Please include a full address and daytime telephone number.

Investing in the UK

Sir, In her drive to force people to invest in the UK ("Pension savers can't expect tax breaks if they don't invest in Britain", Aug 12), Baroness Altmann overlooks the fact that taxpayers and pension savers are the same people. The basic premise of her proposal is that "taxpayers fund tax relief of more than £70 billion a year to supplement individual or employer pension contributions", and hence those individuals should be forced to invest in UK assets. But "taxpayers" and "individuals" are the same people and so they should be able to dictate how their money is invested.

As the pension freedoms have shown, generally individuals know what is better for them than the state does, so mandating different behaviour will just lead to worse results. If politicians want more UK investment from individuals, they should focus on making the UK a more attractive place in which to invest (lower business taxes, less regulation), rather than telling people where to invest their own hard-earned money.
Nick Wallin
London SW12

Making the grade

Sir, Deanne Clay writes about her daughter gaining entry to Oxford despite disappointing exam results (letter, Aug 13). I was accepted for medicine at Edinburgh on the strength of A-level passes in biology and English literature, I think by mistake, yet managed a full and fairly successful 40-year career as a GP. Exams aren't all that they are cracked up to be.
Ian McKee
Edinburgh

Arday 'aberration'

Sir, Deborah Prentice, the University of Cambridge vice-chancellor, is reported to have said that the appointment of Jason Arday was an "aberration" (news, Aug 13). She cannot possibly know this. She could have said that she hoped that it was an aberration but, if the report is correct, she has demonstrated a questionable command of logic and has devalued any further comments that she may make on the matter.
John Sword
Chipping Norton, Oxon

Nocturnal bathers

Sir, I was shocked that trespass, bylaw breaches, criminal damage and reckless behaviour were presented by the anonymous author as little more than a harmless summer adventure ("Hampstead ponds' after-dark secret", Times2, Aug 12). The article describes underage drinking, unauthorised access to bathing ponds with no lifeguards present, damage to facilities and young people diving from a changing room roof into the water. This puts them and others at serious risk of injury. Hampstead Heath is managed as a registered charity by the City of London Corporation at no cost to local communities. Vandalism of this kind is costing the charity thousands of pounds; resources that should be directed to charitable objectives. Hampstead Heath Constabulary acts with the Metropolitan Police. We have authorised it to take robust enforcement action, including arrest and prosecution where appropriate.
Gregory Jones KC
Chair, City of London Corporation's Hampstead Heath, Highgate Wood and Queen's Park committee

THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS SOLD, AGAIN

FROM THE TIMES AUGUST 14, 1926

Mr RC Warner's copy of the first edition of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress", 1678, has again been sold. Its sale at Sotheby's on July 26 for £6,800 and the announcement yesterday of its return by Messrs Quaritch to Messrs Sotheby as not being the first issue of the first edition were followed during the day by another announcement that it had been purchased by one of Messrs Quaritch's customers, an English collector whose name cannot be revealed.

At the auction sale Messrs Quaritch purchased it for stock, holding no commission for it from America or elsewhere. It is satisfactory to be able to report its sale to an English collector, and to know that for the present it remains in this country. No statement is made as to the price paid but there is reason to assume that it is considerably less than the £6,800 at which it was knocked down last month.

In Messrs Sotheby's official announcement it is stated that "the existence of two issues of the first edition had not been generally known to bibliographers". Inquiries show, however, that the fact was known and published 40 years ago, but had been completely forgotten ever since. Mr Joseph Angus, who owned an imperfect copy, wrote a description of it in *Booklore* of November 1886 (p182). He said: "This copy is, I believe, unique in one respect. It has a list of Erata five lines below 'Finis' on the last page, 232." It may be mentioned here that Mr Angus's copy belonged to the Marsom family. Mr Marsom was with Bunyan in prison, and was one of those who said: "John, print it." There is a tradition that he helped to meet the expense, and added the Errata (or Erata, as it appears in print) as the book was passing through the press. Mr Marsom was founder of the Baptist church at Luton. This copy was sold "with all faults" at Sotheby's on July 25, 1921, for £500. So far, only two copies of the second issue have been recorded, the Angus-Marsom and the Warner copies.

● The last Test Match between England and Australia is to begin at the Oval to-day. Contrary to custom this, the deciding match of the rubber, is to be played to a finish, no time limit being imposed. Previously there was a limit of six days.

THETIMES.COM/ARCHIVE

Cultural funding

Sir, Tristan Hambleton (letter, Aug 12) misunderstands the nature of arts (and museums) funding. The majority of "free" museums receive large amounts of public subsidy, either at national or local level; as do the major performing arts institutions. This in no way covers all their running costs however, let alone capital investment such as the Royal Opera House needs (report, Aug 2). I chair the trustees of Wiltshire Museum, which is part of an extensive network of independent museums that have to earn their operational keep through entry charges, memberships, legacies and donations, while depending on the National Lottery Heritage Fund and philanthropy for significant capital investment. I'm all for state cultural funding — its economic yield far exceeds the level of investment made — but all cultural sectors share the same funding challenge.
Caroline Kay
Chair, Wiltshire Museum, Devizes

Dr Google's verdict

Sir, Andrew Colman's letter (Aug 12) regarding his GP wife's gift of a mug citing the superiority of a medical degree over an internet search unfortunately seems to speak to a certain arrogance that I believe remains in the medical world: that all patients are idiots. I feel that had my mother's GP been more open to her symptoms and medical history and her severe headache, she might have been more likely to initially suspect a stroke (which it turned out to be) rather than a urinary tract infection.

All patients consulting a GP are expert on how they feel and worried about what it might mean and no GP ought lightly to dismiss any googled concerns they may have.
Tim Harrison
Castle Acre, Norfolk

Minutiae minister

Sir, Do we really want our prime minister to be determining at a Cobra meeting whether or not to ban disposable barbecues (report, Aug 13)? Surely there are more important issues to occupy his time.
Nick MacAndrew
Hatherden, Hants

Drab design

Sir, Having "beauty" as a planning requirement sounds like a good idea (letter, Aug 13), but is unfortunately in the eye of the beholder. I would settle for "interesting". All the new housing developments I have seen recently are square buildings, with identical square windows, the only relief being slight variations in the shade of the beige or grey brickwork. Adding faux wood cladding makes some even duller.
Bruce Hunt
Linton, Cambs

Called to the bar

Sir, At the age of 73, I may not have a lot in common with Gen Z-ers but one thing we can agree on is queueing in pubs (Notebook, Aug 13). I absolutely detest having to wait at the bar wondering whether someone who arrived after me will be served before me. I find it immensely stressful and have always wondered why customers don't form a queue as they would anywhere else. Young people are right to be so sensible.
Elizabeth Clarke
Sheffield

Daily Universal Register

Edinburgh Art Festival begins, until August 30; World Pipe Band Championships are held in Glasgow today and tomorrow, with 8,000 pipers from 16 nations competing.

Nature notes

Wood pigeons don't make for quiet neighbours; their loud, repetitive calls can continue for what feels like hours. Next time you're woken by their seemingly endless cooing, it might help to reflect that you're listening to a sound that slowly evolved in the greenwood forests that once covered so much of the northern hemisphere. These calls are purposefully penetrative — they had to be heard through all that dense foliage. Wood pigeons are even more of an unmissable presence during courtship. If they're not billing and cooing on chimney pots then they're blundering from roof to roof like cartoon burglars. Their flight displays involve loud wing claps and the sharp whistling of air passing through feathers. JONATHAN TULLOCH

Birthdays today

Halle Berry, *pictured*, actress, *Monster's Ball* (2001), 60; **Darren Clarke**, golfer, winner of the Open (2011), 58; **Nico de Boinville**, National Hunt jockey, 37; **Dermot Desmond**, businessman and financier, largest individual shareholder of Celtic Football Club, 76; **Mark Francois**, Conservative MP for Rayleigh & Wickford, shadow defence minister, 61; **Nick Grimshaw**, TV and radio presenter, BBC Radio 6 Music's breakfast show, 42; **Earvin "Magic" Johnson**, basketball player, five-time NBA champion (1980-88), 67; **Gary Larson**, cartoonist, *The Far Side* (1980-95), 76; **Jason Leonard**, rugby union player, Harlequins and England (both 1990-2004), 58; **Adrian Lester**, actor, *Hustle* (2004-12), 58; **Lord (Jonathan) Marland**, chairman, Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council, 70; **Paddy McGuinness**, TV presenter, actor and comedian, *Top Gear* (2019-22), *A Question of Sport* (2010-23), 53; **Steve Martin**, comedian and actor, *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* (1987), 81; **Jill Morris**, UK ambassador to Turkey, 59; **Jackie Oliver**, Formula 1 racing driver (1967-77), 24 Hours of Le Mans winner (1969), 84; **Thomas Pakenham, Earl of Longford**, author and historian, *The Scramble for Africa* (1991), 93; **Jonathan Powell**, diplomat, UK national security adviser, chief of staff to Tony Blair (1995-2007), 70; **Maddy Prior**, folk singer, Steeleye Span, *All Around My Hat* (1975), 79; **Frederic Raphael**, writer, *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999), 95; **Susan Saint James**, actress, *McMillan & Wife* (1971-76), 80; **Danielle Steel**, novelist, *The Duchess* (2017), 79; **Carlos Tavares**, chief executive, Stellantis (2021-24, car group), 68; **Gillian Taylforth**, actress, *EastEnders* (since 1985), 71; **Lady (Caroline) Waldegrave of North Hill**, founding principal, Leith's School of Food and Wine (1977-2008), 74; **Wim Wenders**, film director, *Paris, Texas* (1984), 81.

On this day

In 2018 a section of the Morandi highway bridge in Genoa, Italy, collapsed, killing 43 people and injuring many others.

The last word

"My greatest strength is the love for my people, my greatest weakness is that I love them too much." Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, prime minister who led Bangladesh to independence, assassinated on this day in 1975, to Sir David Frost on the BBC, 1972.

Testing Times

As students set records for A-level results, and more than ever secure their first-choice university place, government and academia must offer them a better deal

This year's crop of A-level, T-level and Btec students, clutching hard-won grades in the August heat, deserves congratulations. For the third year in a row, top A-level marks across England, Wales and Northern Ireland went up: 28.5 per cent of entries were marked at A* or A. The modest but steady rise in achievement inevitably triggers murmurs about grade inflation. Yet there can be little doubt that most candidates — perhaps aware of growing competition for jobs — have been working extremely hard: the exams remain exacting.

Even more challenging, perhaps, is mapping a way through the unstable terrain of higher education that awaits so many. That journey has become vastly more expensive, and more uncertain, since 1998, when Tony Blair's government passed the Teaching and Higher Education Act, which ended free UK-wide university education. It permitted universities to charge tuition fees capped at £1,000, and replaced maintenance grants with repayable student loans. Shortly afterwards, in 1999, Mr Blair proudly set out his mission to send 50 per cent of young people on to higher education.

The Higher Education Act of 2004 went further, allowing universities to charge variable annual fees, then capped at £3,000 a year, along with government-backed tuition fee loans with low interest rates. Repayments were to begin only after students were in the workplace and earning above a fixed amount. Despite a soft introduction, the template that underpins the higher education landscape today was put in place: expanded access, but at far greater financial cost to individuals.

That personal cost was often justified by the Labour government with reference to the "graduate premium": the average lifetime economic benefit that a university graduate could expect compared with someone without a degree. In 2003 Margaret Hodge, as minister for higher education, cited a purported graduate gain of £400,000. In 2010, Lord Browne of Madingley's review of university funding revised that figure sharply downwards, to £100,000. A recent Institute for Fiscal Studies review still put the advantage at £100,000 once student loan repayments were accounted for. But it also concluded one in four graduates would be financially worse off after going to university.

As the graduate premium has shrunk in real terms, the burden of student loan repayments has rocketed. Government sleight of hand — from freezing repayment thresholds to using the higher RPI inflation figure to calculate loan interest — has stealthily tightened the screws on graduates. They now leave university in England with an average debt of nearly £48,000 to enter a weak jobs market flooded with the well-qualified.

If successive governments have let UK graduates down, universities are frequently doing the same to students. It is disgraceful that when disputes between academics and the university authorities escalate to strike action, students should be asked to accept estimated, unmarked final certificates, as has happened at Nottingham and Edinburgh. And the scandal surrounding Professor Jason Arday at Cambridge University is an extreme example of a lack of intellectual rigour — exchanged for fashionable ideology — that afflicts too much of our wider university system.

None of this necessarily means that university is no longer worth it: in many cases it still is. And the intellectual development that university should properly encourage, along with the experiences and friendships it offers, cannot be strictly quantified by a price tag. Yet school-leavers must now think more critically about what exactly a university course will offer them, and at what cost, than previous generations did; in some instances, work or apprenticeships may offer more. When it comes to the thoughtful, decent treatment of young people at this turning point in life, both government and academia are too often failing the test.

Mickles and Muckles

Scotland is running a huge fiscal deficit that would be ruinous but for UK support

Once upon a time the Scottish National Party revelled in the publication of an accounting exercise called Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland. Gers, as it is known, provides an annual snapshot of the public finances north of the border, and in the years following the financial crisis of 2008 it was used by Alex Salmond, then SNP first minister, to justify the claim that Scotland could go it alone as an independent country. But that was then and this is now. This year's Gers figures continue to paint a sombre picture of the nation's fiscal prospects outside the United Kingdom, as they have done for many years. Try as it might to dismiss figures it once so eagerly prayed in aid, the SNP cannot conceal the fact that its chronic extravagance would be unsustainable but for top-up money from Westminster.

The bald fact is that people living in Scotland benefit from a huge nationwide subsidy that has been described as a "Union dividend": spending above that in England equivalent to £2,720 per head. Yet, under the SNP's disastrous stewardship that relatively lavish funding has resulted not in better education or health but in a yawning deficit.

While per capita spending in the UK in 2025-26 was £19,561 that in Scotland was £22,281. Despite tax revenues being at a historic high, in part because of the SNP government's decision to freeze income tax thresholds for middle and higher earners, the public spending bonus for Scots can be paid for only by running an enormous deficit, amounting to £25.3 billion. That is equivalent to 10.9 per cent of gross domestic product — more than double the UK deficit — and it would instantly consign an independent Scotland to the status of economic basket case, with borrowing costs on the sovereign bond market to match. This bleak reality is unlikely to improve any time soon.

And what have the people of Scotland gained from this massive structural subsidy? Not much. True, Scots university students do not labour under the mountainous debts of their hapless English counterparts, but schooling in Scotland, once the envy of the UK, has over the past 20 years suffered a prolonged decline in standards, both relative to other countries and in absolute terms. Even at its most shameless, the SNP cannot pin the blame for this abject failure on Westminster.

As oil and gas revenues from the North Sea crumble, and with them another argument for an independent Scotland's long-term economic viability, the SNP has sought to shift attention from the unforgiving statistics in Gers to comforting hypotheticals. A Scotland freed from the shackles of His Majesty's Treasury, the party argues, would be able to set its own priorities and reallocate resources. But independence would create more, not fewer, costs. Take defence: assuming Scotland joined Nato it would become responsible for a vast air and maritime defence zone, requiring its own air force and navy. Meanwhile warship building for the Royal Navy on the Clyde would gradually cease as work shifted south, with a commensurate loss of inward industrial investment and jobs.

Gers may be an imperfect predictor of an independent Scotland's fiscal situation but it contains hard figures that no amount of SNP obfuscation can conceal. And those figures should serve, too, as a salutary warning to Andy Burnham. The SNP's failure in education and health was bought with higher spending per head. Simply throwing money at failing systems can never be the answer.

Heavenly Experience

Wednesday's partial solar eclipse was a rare moment of national coming together

In the conclusion of their 1973 masterpiece *Dark Side of the Moon*, Pink Floyd reminded us that "everything under the sun is in tune, but the sun is eclipsed by the moon". That was certainly true on Wednesday evening, as Britain gazed upwards for the fullest solar eclipse since 1999. Penzance was rewarded with the best sight of 95.7 per cent coverage, while Norwich enjoyed a lesser eclipse of 89.7 per cent. The phenomenon lasted two hours, peaking just after 7pm when day turned briefly into twilight. It may not have been the spectacular full eclipse seen from northern Spain and Greenland, but it was still a haunting sight.

In an era when collective national experiences away from the football pitch are few and far between, the eclipse was a rare coming together, when random groups of people gathered on high ground or road bridges. For one magical moment, the doomscrolling ceased. Some Britons displayed their traditional suspicion of nannying official advice by gazing straight at the sun, incurring heaven knows what worrying ocular effects. Others managed to acquire a pair of those elusive eclipse glasses in the last-minute rush, the more generous sharing them with the less well equipped. Pinhole cameras made from paper and cardboard, and even colanders, were deployed to capture an event that reminded viewers of the vast, silent mechanism that governs their lives. It was all so charmingly low-tech.

As for total eclipses, they generally occur every one or two years at some point on the Earth's surface. However, the next total solar eclipse visible from the UK will not occur until 2090, providing plenty of excuses for exotic long-haul travel.

Hopefully, Wednesday's event will encourage more interest in astronomy and the tools that make it happen. Like that wonderful but now endangered radio observatory at Jodrell Bank.

World

Loose lips sank regime's revenge plot to kill Trump

Iran
Michael Evans

The Iranian regime may have ordered an attempt on President Trump's life last month by an operative carrying a shoulder-launched missile, intelligence sources believe.

Western spy services have been poring over thousands of intercepted messages and conversations emanating from Iran in recent weeks, a former Mossad official told The Times.

It is understood that an eavesdropped conversation or directive from the leadership in Tehran may have referred to the option of using a man-portable missile launcher close to the airport where Trump was due to take off on Air Force One. There was a suspected sighting of such a weapon on the day, according to The New York Times.

The intelligence was enough for the US Secret Service to carry out an elaborate subterfuge in which Trump was taken off the presidential jet in a catering truck and put on another plane at Ankara airport for his flight to Britain after a Nato summit in the Turkish capital on July 8.

Rami Igra, a former Mossad official, said that although no attempt was made to kill Trump last month, the president was on a revenge hit list for Iran's network of Shia militant groups.

Trump and Binyamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, are targets because of the death of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in an airstrike on the first day of the US-Israeli war on Iran.

Igra, who was head of Mossad's hostage and missing-in-action department, said: "The Americans are looking at an enormous amount of information, and if there's intelligence that suggests somebody, whether the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) or the Iranian intelligence service or a terrorist group, is seeking revenge on Trump for the assassination of Khamenei, then it has to be taken seriously.

"Khamenei was a religious leader, the most important personality in the Shia world. There are 250 million people who are Shia Muslim. So there is a huge religious incentive for seeking revenge for the death of their leader.

"The intelligence [on the threat against Air Force One] most likely came from a technological source. Technological sources are hardcore evidence which would have come from an interception of a conversation or a directive about where someone should be and at what place and time.

"The Secret Service never takes chances. They're not allowed to take chances. Their job is to imagine the worst all the time.

"Israel always passes on the intelligence it gets, even to unfriendly nations, if it will save peoples' lives."

President Trump was spirited out of Air Force One in a catering truck at Ankara airport after the Secret Service were warned of a plot. Mourners at the funeral of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in Tehran called for revenge, below

Igra added that Iran had a history of assassinations. "But the only assassination specifically involving the Iranian intelligence service was the attack on anti-regime activists at the Mykonos restaurant in Berlin [in 1992]."

Four exiled Kurdish-Iranian individuals were killed in the attack, which a German court blamed on leaders of the Iranian government.

Igra said: "On the whole, Iranian intelligence is not in the business of assassinations. Its speciality is espionage. Israel's Shin Bet counter-espionage organisation has picked up 30 Israeli spies, recruited by the Iranian intelligence service."

Iran has two overlapping intelligence services: the Ministry of Intelligence (MOI), and the IRGC's own organisation, both of which come under the aegis of the supreme leader.

There is also the IRGC's Quds Force, its overseas operations branch that carries out intelligence-gathering and sabotage for Iran's proxy militias across the Middle East, such as Hezbollah. Qasem Soleimani was head of the Quds Force when he was assassinated on Trump's orders in 2020.

The IRGC's intelligence branch has been active in recent years, kidnapping Iranian dissidents and attempting to abduct Israeli businessmen. Both the MOI and IRGC are known to be active in Turkey and the United Arab Emirates.

In 2024 the US Department of Justice accused the IRGC of plotting to assassinate Trump when he was on the presidential campaign trail.

"It's no secret that the Iranians have wanted to assassinate Trump and other figures from his first term like Mike Pompeo [then secretary of state], John Bolton [national security adviser], and Brian Hook [special representative for Iran], who were involved in the drone strike that killed Soleimani," a former senior US diplomatic official said.

"This desire for revenge was quickened by the Israeli pager assassination plot that decapitated Hezbollah, strikes against IRGC figures in Syria and the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh of Hamas in 2024, not to mention the decapitation strikes that began the current war with Iran, including the killing of the supreme leader, and many senior leaders of the security elements," they added.

"Iran has not had much success, so far, with assassinating western senior leaders, as opposed to regime opponents, but they have demonstrated their reach by going after soft targets like the Jewish community centre in Buenos Aires [which killed 85 people in 1994].

"The fact that they have, so far, failed to take out western leaders doesn't mean they will stop trying or that at some point they might not succeed."

The switch of planes at Ankara was not the first time the Secret Service had used deception to protect the president.

Bill Clinton flew secretly to India and Pakistan in 2000 when a crisis was building over Kashmir between the two nuclear powers. He, too, was secretly switched, from a US military aircraft to an unmarked jet, to fly from Mumbai to Islamabad.

Trump's Air Force run was plane embarrassing, Gerard Baker, page 25

To friendship A flower carpet in Brussels of more than 500,000 dahlias inspired

Highest death toll among civilians in Ukraine since 2022

Ukraine
Marc Bennetts

As Russia's war against Ukraine spirals into a new, even bloodier stage, the civilian death toll is rising on both sides of the border, and there is little hope of an end to the killing.

More Ukrainian civilians were killed in July than in any month since May 2022, the United Nations said yesterday. It added that at least 437 civilians had died as a result of Russian attacks, a 70 per cent increase from the same month last year. The overall casualty figures, which included more than 2,600 injuries, were the worst since March 2022, and child casualties were the highest since the early months of the war, it said.

"Every month this year the number of killed and injured civilians has increased. That trend accelerated sharply in July," Danielle Bell, head of the UN's monitoring mission in Ukraine, said.

This month may be even worse. In the first week of August, 17 people were killed in a Russian strike on Kyiv that came as Moscow stepped up its bombardment of the Ukrainian capital.

Pope picks a princess to handle his purse strings
Page 31

Social media influencers in the cartel crosshairs
Page 32

OLIVIER HOSLET/EPA

by The Great Wave off Kanagawa by Katsushika Hokusai celebrates 160 years of diplomacy between Belgium and Japan

President Zelensky said a lack of interceptor missiles for US-made Patriot air-defence systems meant that Ukraine had been unable to shoot down any of the 28 ballistic missiles fired by Russia.

Although President Trump promised to end the fighting within a day of entering the White House, Ukrainian civilian deaths and injuries rose last year by 30 per cent compared with 2024 and by 70 per cent from 2023, according to the United Nations.

The UN also said yesterday that at least 16,874 civilians had been killed since the start of the war, the biggest in Europe since 1945. The true figure is likely to be higher, it added.

Trump has said Washington is unable to spare Patriot interceptor missiles, which have been used by the US and allies in the Middle East, and he has backtracked on a promise to give Kyiv a licence to produce them.

Zelensky has suggested that Washington's reluctance to provide protection may be intended to force it into agreeing to Russia's demands on territory. "Maybe these are political moves to make Ukraine more compliant," the Ukrainian president told his national security and defence council.

At least 437 Ukrainian civilians died in attacks by Russia in July, the UN said

While there have been far more civilian casualties in Ukraine than in Russia, last week António Guterres, the UN secretary-general, condemned what he said was an "alarming pattern of escalating strikes against populated areas" by both countries. A spokesman for the UN added: "Civilians have been increasingly caught in the crossfire of these deadly strikes."

Moscow says that 79 Russian civilians were killed and 601 injured in July. The UN said that it had been unable to verify the figures due to a lack of access to Russian territory.

More than 1,400 civilians have died in Russia and occupied Crimea since 2022, according to a report published in May by Novaya Gazeta Europe, a Russian opposition website.

Zelensky has said that Ukraine's attacks on Russian oil facilities and other infrastructure are an attempt to force Moscow to end its invasion.

Despite Ukraine's success in hitting the Kremlin's military supply lines and striking at targets in Russia, Putin's forces are encroaching on Kramatorsk and Sloviansk, the two biggest towns in Donetsk that are under Kyiv's control.

"This is the last summer when Kramatorsk and Sloviansk are not yet lying in ruins," Artem Kariakin, a Ukrainian soldier, wrote on social media.

Harry Potter and the prisoner of President Putin

Oleksandr Ivanov tells **Catherine Philp** how JK Rowling's stories helped him survive four years in a Russian jail

The prison where Oleksandr Ivanov and his fellow marines were taken felt like another planet, cut off from the outside world and all news of it. All day, every day they were forced to stand in silence. The guards were cold, brutal and cruel.

The Russian jail stirred a memory in Ivanov of the books he lost himself in during his childhood and continued to read. "It was Azkaban."

His comrades looked blank when Ivanov invoked the name of the inescapable prison from the *Harry Potter* series guarded by soul-sucking Dementors. So, in a whisper, the Ukrainian began to tell them the story out of earshot of the guards. Ivanov, now 33, would retell the tale told over seven volumes at least four times, to multiple cellmates, over the course of 1,494 days in captivity — four years, one month and three days after he was taken prisoner in Mariupol.

"It kept our hopes alive," he said in Kyiv, recounting his captivity two months after he was freed this May in a prisoner swap. "With every chapter we had something to look forward to. I stopped on a cliffhanger every night and the next morning someone would say, so, we're waiting. Continue the story."

News of Ivanov's storytelling made it back to Ukraine long before he did.

For the first three years of captivity, his family heard nothing beyond the photographs they'd already seen showing him being taken prisoner in Mariupol. It was only when a cellmate was released last year that news emerged both of his survival and and his feat of memory and motivation.

"For my wife, this was very important to hear," Ivanov said. "After three years in captivity, she understood, that if I am still telling the story of *Harry Potter*, it means that my mind is still sound."

At least 7,000 Ukrainian soldiers and as many as 15,000 civilians are believed to be held in Russia's prisons and labour camps in dire conditions, subject to abuse, starvation and torture.

Russia's use of torture "is not random, aberrant behavior," according to the UN's special rapporteur, but "orchestrated as part of state policy to intimidate, instill fear or punish".

Ivanov does not wish to speak of that, though there is little doubt of its routine use or that he himself also went through it.

"Of course it's difficult for me to forget. But when I returned from captivity, I watched a lot of videos with guys who were in captivity in Russia, talking about this but forgetting that this video will be watched by a wife or a child of someone who is still in prison. So for their sake, I don't want to talk about it."

Ivanov was captured in April 2022, as he and his fellow marines attempted to break out of encirclement in Mariupol. The Russian soldiers who captured them were cordial. All that changed when they reached the first of four prisons he would pass through in the ensuing four years.

"With the soldiers there was some respect between military guys," he said. "But when we arrived at the prison, I can't call them people.They live by their own rules and their rules are inhuman. They think we are monsters and they were instructed to behave with us like with monsters."

Ivanov ate up fantasy books in his youth from Tolkein to Gaiman but it was JK Rowling's series that truly seized his imagination. The behaviour of the guards took Ivanov's mind back to one of her darkest creations.

"I thought: 'they are like Dementors,'" Ivanov said, the monsters Rowling created to evoke the feelings caused by clinical depression. "They sucked our happiness. They tried to crush our mind, to crush our characters."

Rowling has written to Ivanov. "I hear you are a great fan of 'Harry's' and of the comfort the stories gave you during your captivity in Russia," she wrote. "I am so very happy to hear that you have been released and have returned home to Ukraine and wish you a long and happy life going forward."

His release came without warning. The prisoners were called from their cell and taken to buses, then to a military airfield and aboard a plane and on to the border.

Ivanov said he cried for the first time since his capture after seeing Ukrainian civilians lining the road to cheer their return. He was given only a minute or two to embrace his wife and son, Demyd, before he was taken off for debriefing by the intelligence services. He did not see them again until two weeks into physical and psychological rehabilitation.

Re-entry into freedom and ordinary life was not easy, Ivanov said. "My child was three when I was captured," he says. "Now he is eight, he is a different person. I have to relearn him." He is luckier than many, he believes. "When I was in captivity, I understood that a lot of families will break after returning home. I was sure my wife was waiting for me, but I understood that even if there was a 1 per cent I was wrong, the main thing is that she is still alive. My son is still alive."

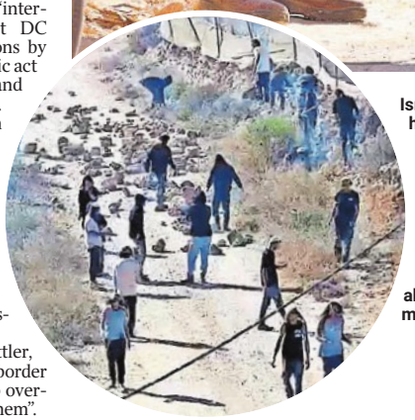
Oleksandr Ivanov with a letter from JK Rowling and a signed copy of Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone

World

US brands Israeli settlers 'terrorists'

Israel
Gabrielle Weiniger

ALAA BADARNEH/EPA; UPI/ALAMY LIVE NEWS



Israeli soldiers have entered Qusra, where residents have been pelted with rocks, left, and the mosque, right, was set ablaze last month

America's ambassador to Israel has issued a rare condemnation of settler "Israeli terrorists" who have besieged a Palestinian village in the West Bank for several days.

Mike Huckabee said yesterday the US embassy in Jerusalem had requested the Israeli military and police move in overnight to expel the settlers and dismantle their camps around the village of Qusra, south of Nablus.

The village had been surrounded since Sunday by extremist settlers who targeted the homes of at least two families, including one US citizen, preventing them from leaving or obtaining supplies.

Israel Defence Forces (IDF) soldiers entered Qusra under the cover of darkness after clashing with the settlers earlier in the day but failing to remove their makeshift camps. The military said it detained at least one Israeli at the site, confiscated equipment and would continue to carry out patrols in "defensive missions" to "maintain security and protect the area".

Responding to criticism and appeals to President Trump's administration to intervene, Huckabee posted on X that the embassy had been "VERY involved & the IDF & Israel Police have gone at our request to remove the Israeli terrorists doing this".

He added: "The actions of those doing this to this family's home is criminal. [The White House] hasn't 'intervened' because we have kept DC apprised of the situation. Actions by those who carried out this horrific act of terror meant to intimidate and harass this family are disgusting.

"No excuse for such thuggish behaviour. But saying [I or the US embassy] doesn't care or hasn't done anything is simply untrue."

Huckabee posted a video showing a convoy of Israeli military and police vehicles in Qusra as evidence that they were removing "illegal trespassers there to intimidate Palestinian residents".

Elisha Yered, an Israeli settler, wrote on social media that "border police officers raided their camp overnight and demolished three of them".

Abd al-Azim Wadi, the Palestinian head of the local council, denied that all the settlers had been removed and said a large military presence remained in the village and surrounding hillside.

Israeli forces initially did little to aid the village when a dozen settlers arrived and began intimidating residents on Sunday. After two Palestinian homeowners reported the attacks to the Israeli army, the first soldiers at the scene were filmed praying with the settlers. An attempt on Wednesday to remove them led to violent clashes before the IDF withdrew. The Abu Ridi and Hassan families posted on social media asking for help after their water and power supplies were cut off and their food stocks ran low.

Qusay Abu Ridi said his family were "living in fear", adding: "They are being harassed and attacked by the settlers. I cannot do anything about it."

Residents initially said they had been asked to leave their homes by the IDF before the operation to remove the settlers. Early yesterday, the Israeli army tried to evict several Palestinians. They refused, fearing they would not be allowed to return.

"The soldiers were instructed that the Qusra residents will remain in their homes," the IDF said. "Furthermore, the soldiers will not operate inside the Palestinian family's home located near the site where the tent that was evacuated and dismantled had been erected."

The IDF said it was working to "avoid disruption" to the residents.

The United Nations said about 15 Palestinians, including two children, were "trapped inside their homes in a state of terror, unable to attend to their basic needs and without access to water or electricity".

More than 500,000 Israelis live in settlements in the West Bank that are illegal under international law. Supported by members of the government including Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, extremist settlers have used intimidation and violence to drive residents from their homes.

Qusra is located in Area B, administrated by the Palestinian Authority but controlled by the Israeli military. The IDF has been accused of doing little to aid Palestinians and the UN said attacks by settlers had reached "unprecedented levels". Last month there was an arson attack at the newly built mosque in Qusra.

The UN said 76 Palestinians, including 18 children, have been killed in the West Bank by Israeli forces or settlers this year. According to the same report, about 3,800 Palestinians have been displaced due to settler violence, demolitions and evictions.

Putin goads Japan with 'unacceptable' visit to disputed islands

Russia
Marc Bennetts

President Putin's first visit to a disputed island in the Pacific Ocean has been called "unacceptable" by Japan in the latest sign of tension between Moscow and Tokyo.

Putin visited Iturup, one of the four Kuril Islands that Japan and Russia both claim as their own territory. State media showed him sampling salmon roe at a fish factory, meeting children and visiting a hospital.

The islands, which Japan calls the northern territories, have been controlled by Moscow since the end of the Second World War, when they were annexed by the Soviet Union. About 17,000 Japanese residents were deported. The islands are today home to about 20,000 Russian citizens.

The dispute prevented Moscow and Tokyo from signing a formal peace treaty in 1945 and there have been tensions over the islands between the two countries for decades.

The Soviet Union only declared war on Japan on August 8, 1945, two days after the United States dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima and a week before Tokyo surrended.

Sanae Takaichi, Japan's prime minister, said that Putin's visit "offends the sentiments of the Japanese people and is absolutely unacceptable".

Toshimitsu Motegi, the Japanese foreign minister, also protested, using Tokyo's name for Iturup. "The northern territories, including Etorofu, are Japan's inherent territory, both historically and based on international law," he said.

Relations have deteriorated between Russia and Japan since the start of Moscow's war in Ukraine. Japan has joined G7 sanctions against Russia and provided Ukraine with funds and non-lethal military aid.

Kyiv formally recognised the islands as Japanese territory after the start of Russia's full-scale invasion.

In recent years, Moscow has boosted its military presence on the islands and Tokyo often deploys fighter jets to monitor Russian and Chinese naval exercises close to Japan. This month, Japan highlighted what it called growing risks from China, Russia and North Korea. Putin said yesterday that Tokyo's sanctions were "unprovoked" and denied Moscow was a threat to Japan. "On the contrary, it has territorial claims against our country," he said.

Putin arrived on Iturup after inspecting military drills off the island of Sakhalin. Although he rarely left Moscow at the start of the year, possibly because of fears for his safety, he has visited six cities, as well as Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands, in the past three weeks.

Analysts say the trips are an attempt to boost his declining approval ratings, which last month fell to their lowest since the start of the Ukraine war, according to a Kremlin-affiliated pollster.

A woman's place is on the throne, hints Japan's crown prince

Japan
Richard Spencer

The heir to Emperor Naruhito of Japan has made a rare intervention in politics to cast doubt on the question of whether he should necessarily inherit the throne.

Crown Prince Akishino, 60, right, is likely to become emperor should he outlive his older brother, the emperor, owing to Japan's male-only line of succession. If not, the throne will pass to Akishino's son, Prince Hisahito, 19.

For years, many Japanese have urged a change in the law that would allow Naruhito's only child, Princess Aiko, who is 24 and hugely popular, into the line of succession. However, recent changes to the Imperial Household Law announced by the conservative government of Sanae Takaichi, the country's first female prime minister, reinforce the status quo.

The Japanese royal family are strictly forbidden from commenting on political matters, including their positions.

However, at a meeting with the press, the crown prince gave signals that he was at least personally conflicted about the issue. "I am a human being, so of course I have various thoughts and opinions," he said. "I think it would be strange if I didn't."

He acknowledged that he could not give a straight answer on the issue. He said: "How can I express those thoughts, and what should I do if they involve the law? I think that relationship is very difficult."

When he turned to the general question of the role of women, he was on safer ground. The statutory adjustments drop the requirement that female members of the royal family lose their titles and responsibilities if they marry a commoner.

Akishino said: "The role of members of the imperial family is to fulfil their duties in response to the demands of society, if those demands are good."

He then added a comment that could refer to the key matter for debate: "I believe there is no distinction between men and women when it comes to fulfilling those duties."

There have been a number of reigning empresses in Japanese history. However, rules established under the so-called Meiji Restoration in the late 19th century imposed patriarchal laws that excluded women completely. In the American-approved constitution brought in after the Second World War, that aspect of the monarchy was left unchanged.

There was a brief crisis in the early years of this century, after Princess Aiko's birth. The government ordered a study of the feasibility of allowing her to inherit, but it was abandoned after her cousin, Prince Hisahito, was born.

However, there remains a paucity of male heirs. Should Hisahito and his father both die, Naruhito's uncle, Prince Masahito, 90, will become the heir.

Naruhito is 66. In an added complication, his father, Emperor Emeritus Akihito, who abdicated in 2019 due to old age, is still alive at the age of 92.

The statutory revisions do not merely leave the status quo unaltered, but go a long way to actively prevent a woman being considered at a later date. To resolve the male shortage, they ease the path to adoption of distant relatives of the royal family with a view to their heirs eventually succeeding — so long as all involved, along with all their royal lineage, are male.

Pope picks a princess to handle his purse strings

Vatican
Tom Kington

Hailing from Liechtenstein, where her ruling family dates back to 1136, Gisela Bergmann should be a dab hand managing the finances of another microstate with a long history.

The Pope this week appointed Bergmann, a princess of Liechtenstein, to help manage the Vatican's cashflow, as he continues the recent papal practice of entrusting senior roles in the management of the Catholic Church to women.

The pontiff named the 36-year-old princess as the latest member of his Council for the Economy, the group of experts and cardinals who keep an eye on the Vatican's finances.

The princess from the tiny European state arrives at the even tinier Vatican with a CV packed with credentials, starting with her full-time job running the Liechtenstein royal family's wealth management business, Industrie-Und Finanzkontor.

Bergmann has previously said: "We look at wealth and family from a holistic perspective, always thinking in terms of generations," a message that will go down well at the Vatican where decision-makers famously think in terms of centuries rather than weeks or years.

"Leo is doing well by bringing in outsiders to join the council and wealth managers are what you would expect," Ed Condon, editor of The Pillar, a Catholic news website, said.

Once notorious for the amateurish and opaque handling of its money, the Vatican has cleaned up its act in recent years, although allegations of embezzlement surrounding a loss-making investment in Chelsea flats are still rumbling through the Vatican courts.

Apart from her work with the family firm, the princess will bring experience from working at the Hannam & Partners investment bank in London and Midas Gold Corp (now called Perpetua Resources Corp) a goldmining development company in Canada.

Bergmann is joined on the council by another new member Elena Principato-Wettstein, 39, an Italian executive director at UBS bank. The appointment of the women, who will help approve the Vatican's annual budget, are part of a wave of female appointments at the Vatican driven by a new constitution signed off by Leo's predecessor Francis in 2022, which allows women to run Vatican departments for the first time.

Leo may show no sign of opening up the priesthood to women, but the message coming from the Vatican is that management is up for grabs. This year, the Pope named a Salesian nun, Alessandra Smerilli, as prefect of the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, which handles humanitarian aid and human rights.

A year earlier, before his death in April 2025, Francis named the Italian Franciscan nun Raffaella Petrini to run the Vatican city state. She had previously become the first woman hired by the Dicastery for Bishops, which vets new bishops.

In a surprise move this year, Leo hired Maria Montserrat Alvarado, 39, from the US Catholic TV network EWTN to become the first woman to run the Vatican's communications office. The decision raised eyebrows since EWTN has been a voice for conservative Catholics and regularly lambasted the liberal Francis.

Condon said the recent appointments of women had become business as usual. "I did not see the appointment of Montserrat Alvarado creating resistance and people are comfortable with Petrini running the Vatican city state," he said.

Writing in the National Catholic Reporter this month, Michael Sean Winters claimed: "The Roman Curia for centuries has been all male, all white, all Italian and all clerical. Not anymore and not ever again." He added: "There is a revolution that has been occurring in the past few years as first Pope Francis and now Pope Leo are appointing women to positions of authority and responsibility in the highest ranks of the Roman Curia."

The first woman to lead a Vatican dicastery, sister Simona Brambilla, took over the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life in January last year, a job overseeing the over 700,000 religious men and women throughout the world.

However, Condon said her job came with a caveat: "The tension comes when spiritual governance is involved, the power to laicise clergy or even suppress a religious order. That is when they appoint a cardinal as pro-prefect who can co-sign documents to give them sacramental power."

When Francis appointed Brambilla, he also appointed a cardinal as pro-prefect of the dicastery. "That feels like a bit of a fudge," Condon said.

ANDREAS SOLARO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; ALAMY

Pope Leo has hired Maria Montserrat Alvarado, left, to head communications, as well as Gisela Bergmann

World

Influencers in the cartel crosshairs

Social media stars have become deeply entangled in Mexico's deadly narco conflict, writes **Stephen Gibbs**

César Gastélum, above left, and Valeria Márquez were both social media influencers with thousands of followers and both were murdered by cartels

Shortly after 8pm on a hot, muggy night, César Gastélum began a livestream outside a KFC restaurant in Culiacan, Mexico. Two friends joined him, taking part in a social media challenge that involved dressing up as delivery drivers.

It all seemed like harmless fun until a motorbike carrying a pillion passenger passed by.

"They scare me," said Gastélum, 25. Moments later, the motorcycle returned and drew up alongside the group. The helmeted passenger pulled out a pistol and shot the content creator in the head. He slumped to the ground. His companions were unharmed.

Gastélum's murder, on August 4, was the latest in a grim catalogue of similar cases. According to El Universal, a Mexican newspaper, at least 19 content creators have been killed in the country since 2024. Eight of those killings, including that of Gastélum, occurred in Sinaloa.

The state has been convulsed by a fratricidal war within the Sinaloa cartel, which erupted after the arrest and transfer to the US of Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada in 2024. A faction loyal to Zambada's allies, known as La Mayiza, has been battling a rival group led by the sons of the notorious drug lord Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, the co-founder of the Sinaloa cartel and a former reported billionaire who is serving a life sentence in the US. The carnage has left thousands dead or missing.

One theory is that Gastélum was killed because he was supporting the Mayiza faction. Others have speculated that Gastélum's habit of wearing a hat in his TikTok videos was either deliberate propaganda or a fatal mistake, given that Zambada was also nicknamed "El del Sombrero", or "the one with the hat". Ten days after his death, no arrests have been made.

Whether Gastélum was an innocent victim or not, analysts say many influencers of his generation are this century's version of the *narcocorrido* singers: popular musicians who have romanticised the lives of Mexican bandits since the 1920s. Modern-day influencers, some say, are far more powerful than their crooning forebears, as they do not just sing about the adventures of a criminal lifestyle; they live it.

Perhaps the most notorious influencer who has intertwined drug culture with social media was Claudia Ochoa Félix. She was often referred to as "Mexico's Kim Kardashian", owing to her striking resemblance to the American socialite and a shared passion for private jets and cosmetic surgery. Ochoa Félix's online presence showed she had another enthusiasm: weapons. This fuelled suspicions that she was an assassin, allegedly running an armed wing of the Sinaloa cartel, an allegation she denied. When she died at the age of 32 in 2019, apparently of an overdose, she had hundreds of thousands of followers.

Influencers in northwestern Mexico often find themselves in overlapping social circles with senior drug cartel members. Dating a successful influencer, often referred to as a *buchona* in Sinaloa, projects power and success for the drug trafficker. For the influencer, the relationship can bring rapid access to the riches of a multi-billion-dollar business. When the relationships flounder, narcos have shown themselves to be as brutal to their ex-girlfriends as they are to their criminal rivals.

That appears to have been the case for Valeria Márquez, a 23-year-old influencer who was shot dead in May last year while livestreaming from her salon in Jalisco. Authorities this month said Márquez had been in a romantic relationship with Francisco Álvarez, a son of Ramón Ángel Álvarez Ayala — a senior figure in the Jalisco New Generation cartel who was captured in a special forces operation in July.

María Fernanda Arocha, from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (Acled), said that influencers with large followings in Mexico can serve as propagandists for cartels, aiding recruitment. They can also promote supposedly legitimate businesses which serve as fronts for money laundering.

Acled reports that there are 64 influencers under investigation for helping criminal gangs launder their profits in Mexico.

Split, Hvar & the Delights of Dalmatia

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'Victim' of Epstein model scout sues French state

France A former model is suing the French state, alleging prosecutors failed to act on her rape complaint against Jeffrey Epstein's associate Daniel Siad before his death last month. Ebba Karlsson, 56, reported Siad, a former modelling scout, to police in February for alleged rape in the 1990s, but he was not questioned. More than 20 women alleged Siad, 69, raped or trafficked them to Epstein, which he denied. The prosecutor's office said that Siad was investigated but there was not enough evidence to arrest him.

Drug tests after pilot 'smoked marijuana'

India Air India pilots will undergo mandatory drug screening, according to an internal memo, after a captain involved in a serious mid-air incident reportedly tested positive for marijuana. Air India said the test results had not been shared with them. The memo said: "We have decided to undertake a full screening of all group pilots for any substances or medications that are not permitted." On August 4, at least 24 passengers were hurt when an Airbus A320 lost about 300 feet of altitude on a flight to Delhi.

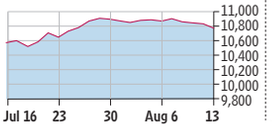
Man smuggles hundreds of lizards hidden in socks

Japan A Mexican man was arrested at Tokyo's Haneda airport after smuggling 200 lizards hidden inside 22 pairs of socks and T-shirts in his suitcase. Daniel Isaac Velasco Baltazar, 23, is believed to have smuggled the lizards from South Korea on Saturday for a reptile exhibition and sale. It included nine Mexican alligator lizards believed to have been bought in Mexico for between 560 (£2.60) and 750 yen each, which are worth up to 100,000 yen each in Japan.

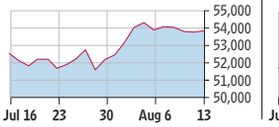
Business

WORLD MARKETS (Change on the day)

FTSE 100
10,772.67 (-60.48) ▼



Dow Jones
53,839.99 (+69.72) ▲



COMMODITIES

Gold
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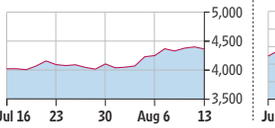

Brent crude (6pm)
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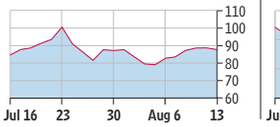
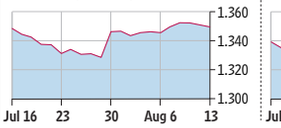


CURRENCIES

£/$
$1.3495 (-0.0014) ▼



£/€
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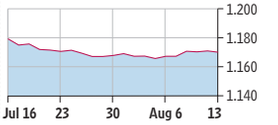

Anthropic could eclipse Musk's SpaceX with a $2trn valuation

Chris Dorrell
Technology Business Correspondent

Anthropic could be valued at more than $2 trillion in its forthcoming initial public offering, putting the company behind Claude on track for the largest listing in history.

At that level, the artificial intelligence business would trump Elon Musk's SpaceX, the rocket-maker that became a listed company in June with a value of $1.75 trillion. Investors believe that Anthropic's lead in the capability of its large language models, as well as the rapid adoption of its tools among businesses, justifies the valuation.

Annual recurring revenue — Anthropic's preferred revenue metric, which extrapolates the company's annual performance from a single month's revenue figures — is expected to reach $100 billion to $120 billion by the end of 2026, up from $48 billion in May and $9 billion at the start of the year.

Anthropic filed to list on the New York Stock Exchange in June, and the float is expected to take place in September or October.

Senior executives at the company have not yet set a target price, according to the Financial Times, which reported the $2 trillion valuation.

Co-founded in 2021 by its chief executive Dario Amodei, Anthropic has made rapid progress this year. The company's models have overtaken OpenAI's among business users, and it secured a valuation of $965 billion in May, making it more valuable than the ChatGPT maker.

That valuation came after a $65 billion funding round, underlining the speed at which investors' expectations for the company have risen.

However, Anthropic has faced challenges, including becoming the first American company to be designated as a supply-chain risk by the US government. Anthropic is challenging the designation, which restricts federal agencies and defence contractors from using its models.

Competitive pressures have intensified. Anthropic boasts the most capable models in the market, but cheaper open-source models are closing the gap. Moonshot, a Chinese AI start-up,

Continued on page 35

Harvey Nichols falls to Frasers

Mike Ashley's group buys chain in pre-pack deal

Alex Ralph Chief Business Correspondent
Isabella Fish Retail Editor

Mike Ashley's Frasers Group has acquired the struggling department store chain Harvey Nichols through a controversial fast-track insolvency process.

FTI Consulting, the administrators for Harvey Nichols, said the pre-pack deal "safeguards a 200-year-old institution" and covers about 1,000 jobs, the retailer's six UK stores, the online unit and international franchise operations.

However, Frasers, the FTSE 100 retailer, warned that it would begin a "significant restructuring" of Harvey Nichols to "right-size the business" and return it to profit. It is expected to lead to store closures.

Michael Murray, chief executive of Frasers and Ashley's son-in-law, said: "The turnaround will require tough choices, and we are prepared to make those decisions, even if that means a smaller business in the near term, to create a stronger and more sustainable Harvey Nichols for the long term."

The pre-pack deal follows a sales process in which Frasers beat Next, the London-listed retailer, to take control of the troubled business.

The upmarket department store chain had warned in its latest accounts that it would need to "cease trading" within a year if it failed to secure new investment. Ashley has said Harvey Nichols was in a "death spiral".

Harvey Nichols was founded in 1831 as a Knightsbridge linen shop. It expanded into a British luxury business that achieved pop-culture fame in the 1990s as the fashion sanctuary for the characters Eddy and Patsy in the BBC sitcom *Absolutely Fabulous*.

The business has struggled to keep its place at the top and Harvey Nichols has not made a profit since the pandemic. It has been squeezed by online competition, high costs, underperforming regional stores and weaker spending from international tourists. Rivals including Harrods and Selfridges have invested heavily in their shops and online businesses.

The deal with Frasers includes the Harvey Nichols estate of six UK stores: the main branch in Knightsbridge, west London, and others in Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester, Leeds and Edinburgh. Frasers plans to integrate Harvey Nichols into the group and will review and "rationalise" the store portfolio, organisational structure, operating model and cost base.

Harvey Nichols caters to the elite with exclusive experiences such as private "Pilates in the Clouds" Reformer Pilates sessions, rooftop champagne bars and designer gowns costing thousands of pounds. Ashley's Sports Direct made its name by targeting the everyday bargain hunter with £5 polyester tracksuits, discounted trainers and its infamous giant two-pint mugs.

The acquisition of Harvey Nichols deepens Frasers' push into upmarket retailing. It hopes to expand its relationships with luxury brands such as Gucci, Burberry, Prada and Dior.

The name of the company was changed from Sports Direct to Frasers in 2019 after Ashley bought House of Fraser, another struggling department store chain. Ashley stepped down as

Continued on page 35

ALAMY

Joanna Lumley as Patsy Stone in Absolutely Fabulous, the BBC sitcom that lifted the struggling luxury retailer Harvey Nichols into pop culture fame

Government pays Avant's cladding bill

James Hurley, Alistair Osborne

The government is facing criticism over an "outrageous" deal to provide credit to help a housebuilder owned by one of the world's largest hedge funds to pay for liabilities arising from the post-Grenfell cladding scandal.

The housing department entered into a "payment plan" to help Avant Homes meet its £113 million bill for fixing potentially dangerous cladding on buildings, the company disclosed in its latest accounts.

Avant is owned by Elliott Management and chaired by Jeff Fairburn, the former Persimmon boss who received £82 million in bonuses in 2017 and 2018, underpinned by the taxpayer-backed Help to Buy scheme. Elliott is a prominent US investor with about $80 billion of funds under management.

New laws brought in following the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017, which killed 72 people, placed the responsibility on developers to pay for remedial works on buildings going back 30 years.

Remediation costs were initially footed by taxpayers through the Building Safety Fund (BSF), which then recouped the money from the developer responsible for building a property.

Housebuilders later pledged to assess potentially dangerous properties and then pay for remedial works, but Avant disclosed that in January it had "entered into a payment plan agreement" with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government that "transfers the remediation obligations".

Instead of Avant delivering the remediation works, the government will fund them and seek to recover its money from Avant.

Dean Finch, the chief executive of Persimmon, said: "I do think it's pretty outrageous that the British government is bailing out one of the richest American private equity houses."

Avant declined to answer questions about the deal, citing confidentiality obligations. Elliott and the government were approached for comment.

Outrage over Avant's deal, page 34

Need to know

1 Mike Ashley's Frasers Group has acquired the struggling department store chain Harvey Nichols in a pre-pack deal. Frasers, the FTSE 100 retailer, warned that it would begin a "significant restructuring". Page 33

2 Anthropic could be valued at more than $2 trillion in its initial public offering, putting the Claude maker on track for the largest listing in history. The AI business would trump Elon Musk's SpaceX, listed in June with a value of $1.75 trillion. Page 33

3 The government is facing criticism over an "outrageous" deal to provide credit to help the housebuilder Avant, owned by Elliott one of the world's largest hedge funds, meet its £113 million bill arising from the post-Grenfell cladding scandal. Page 33

4 Birkenstock raised its full-year sales growth forecast and beat quarterly revenue estimates as demand for its high-end sandals benefited from record-breaking summer heatwaves around the world.

5 The landlord behind the Docklands financial district swung back to a profit in the first half. Canary Wharf Group made a £176.3 million profit for the six months to end of June, reversing the £33 million loss from a year earlier. Page 36

6 The UK economy expanded by 0.4 per cent in the second quarter, driven by growth in services, while GDP in June was boosted by the start of the World Cup and the scorching weather. The Office for National Statistics said growth slowed from 0.6 per cent in the first quarter. Page 38

7 Stella David, chief executive of Entain, the gambling group behind Ladbrokes and Coral, has hit back at Andy Burnham's plans to tighten rules around the opening of new betting shops, saying traditional bookmakers should not be lumped in with gambling arcades. Page 39

8 Young staff working just one day a week have started to call in sick as they can still receive 80 per cent of their wages, employers have claimed. Page 40

"There are numerous well-documented drawbacks to being competent at work

Rhymer Rigby, page 37

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Frasers Group's taste for trouble

Mike Ashley's Frasers Group has a penchant for distressed brands. The retail empire, which started out as Sports Direct in 1982, has built a portfolio of once high-profile names, snapping up collapsed labels and those on the verge of failure. Many of them are stocked in the retailers it operates, including Jack Wills, Missguided, plus House of Fraser, the department store chain (Isabella Fish writes).

The company has also been acquiring stakes in key suppliers including Burberry, Mulberry and Hugo Boss, as well as rivals such as Boohoo and Asos.

These aggressive deals reflect the group's broader "elevation strategy", designed to move Frasers into more premium areas while strengthening its position across luxury, sports, electronics and digital retail.

The strategy is also about diversification. Frasers is no longer simply a sports retailer: it has interests spanning fashion, luxury, technology, fitness and property, including shopping centres. This gives the group numerous sources of revenue and assets beyond its traditional retail operations, potentially making it more resilient when one part of the market struggles.

However, revenues have been under pressure across luxury and sports, highlighting the risks of expanding aggressively while consumer demand remains a challenge.

So what does Frasers Group want with Harvey

Outrage over Avant's deal to defer £113m cladding bill

James Hurley, Alistair Osborne

A housebuilder owned by one of the world's largest hedge funds has received credit from the government to help it pay for its liabilities arising from the post-Grenfell cladding scandal.

Avant Homes, which is owned by Elliott Management, the US hedge fund, and chaired by Jeff Fairburn, said it had entered into a "payment plan" to help it meet its £113 million bill for fixing potentially dangerous cladding on buildings. A rival developer called the deal "outrageous".

Avant is one of Britain's biggest housebuilders. Fairburn famously received £82 million in bonuses in 2017 and 2018 while boss of Persimmon, underpinned by the taxpayer-backed Help to Buy scheme. The bonuses sparked outrage and ultimately led to his departure from Persimmon.

Elliott is a prominent US investor which has about $80 billion of funds under management.

New laws brought in following the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017, which killed 72 people, placed the responsibility on developers to pay for remedial works on buildings going back 30 years.

Costs were initially footed by taxpayers through the Building Safety Fund (BSF), which then recouped the money from developers. The BSF was set up in 2020 to provide funding to fix fire safety problems.

Housebuilders later pledged to assess potentially dangerous properties and then pay for remedial works themselves. However, in its accounts, Avant Homes disclosed that in January that it had "entered into a payment plan agreement" with the housing department that "transfers the remediation obligations". Instead of Avant delivering the remediation works, they will receive taxpayer funding, which the government would recover later.

"The group is no longer being required to undertake or procure the works required to remediate buildings which require works," Avant said in its accounts. It said the government had helped it spread the cost "over a number of years, which provides important liquidity support as well as the deliverability of long-term committed finance".

Avant declined to answer questions about the deal, citing confidentiality.

The Avant accounts contain a warning that "material uncertainties" may "cast significant doubt on the group's and the company's ability to continue as a going concern and therefore [Avant Homes] may be unable to realise their assets and discharge their liabilities in the normal course of business".

The government was asked if it had sought any assurances over what would happen in the event of insolvency.

Dean Finch, the chief executive of Persimmon, said: "I do think it's pretty outrageous that the British government is bailing out one of the richest American private equity houses."

In the year to June 2025, Avant had revenues of £473.6 million and made a pre-tax loss of £111.1 million. It had finance expenses of £93.3 million. Its indebtedness has since been reduced to about £20 million. It lists a £113.2 million provision related to cladding, a mix of money owed to taxpayers through the BSF and an estimate of the cost to ensure the remaining buildings are safe.

Avant has previously pointed out that buildings requiring remediation were developed under previous ownership. The business was acquired before the legal liability over remediation existed.

Elliott and the government were approached for comment.

Housing boss rebuilds story

Jeff Fairburn is perhaps best known for the £82 million in bonuses he was handed as the boss of Persimmon in 2017 and 2018. The payouts caused outrage and ultimately contributed to his departure (Charlotte Bend writes).

Now, the 60-year-old is back in the news after Avant Homes, the indebted housebuilder he chairs, secured credit with the government to help it pay to fix potentially dangerous cladding.

Fairburn joined Avant in 2021 as chairman after his building firm, Berkeley DeVeer, partnered with Elliott Management, the American hedge fund, to acquire the company.

Avant is one of a number of ventures for Fairburn since he left Persimmon. Critics argued the Persimmon payouts were largely driven by rising property prices linked to the government-backed Help to Buy scheme which in turn boosted profits for the builders.

In 2023 the former FTSE 100 chief executive set up a new "credit-granting" business based in Durham, registered as Third Stone Investments.

York-born Fairburn, the son of a mechanic, has spent his career in property development after leaving school at 17, starting as a trainee quantity surveyor and completing a building course at York College. After working at McCarthy & Stone, the retirement property developer, he joined Persimmon in 1989.

He moved to work as a technical director when the company opened an office in Newcastle. By 2000 he was managing the northeast region and was involved in the purchase of Beazer Homes in 2001 for £612 million. He has said the deal was one of his career highlights — along with surviving the recessions that plague the housing market.

ANDY RAIN/EPA

The Harvey Nichols deal continues the "elevation strategy" championed by Frasers boss Michael Murray, below left

Nichols? The brand fits neatly into its attempt to move upmarket. The elevation strategy, championed by the group's chief executive Michael Murray, Ashley's son-in-law, aims to move Frasers away from its "pile it high, sell it cheap" image and towards premium brands and more upmarket retail experiences through businesses such as Flannels and premium gyms.

Harvey Nichols is a direct competitor to Frasers and Flannels. Acquiring a rival removes competition from the high street while giving Frasers control of valuable stores, locations and customer relationships.

There has been speculation that the chain could eventually be converted into a Frasers or Flannels format, which would mean Harvey Nichols could disappear as a standalone brand.

The deal was completed through a pre-pack administration, a process Frasers has become accustomed to using. It allows an insolvent company's assets to be sold to a new owner immediately after entering administration, potentially leaving some historic liabilities and debts behind.

While commercially clever, this approach can upset creditors, particularly suppliers that may not be paid for stock they have delivered. Similar concerns surrounded Matches Fashion, and such arrangements risk damaging relationships with brands.

Frasers' strategy is more than simply rescuing struggling retailers. It is about gaining control of brands, reducing competition, moving upmarket and diversifying the business.

But if Frasers wants to establish itself as a premium retail group, it will need to ensure that its aggressive acquisition strategy does not continue to come at the expense of its relationships with the suppliers and brands it depends upon.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 33

Frasers buys Harvey Nichols

Frasers' chief executive in 2022 but remains its majority shareholder and a hugely influential figure.

Louise Déglise-Favre, the lead apparel analyst at GlobalData, said that Frasers had "spent several years constructing a luxury proposition that it has been unable to fully realise".

She added: "While Flannels provided scale, and the group's shareholdings in Mulberry and Burberry provided proximity to brands, the houses that define genuine luxury have remained reluctant to trade within a Frasers fascia."

Déglise-Favre said the outcome of the Harvey Nichols deal was likely to be a "more concentrated luxury proposition centred on Knightsbridge, with weaker stores absorbed under the other fascias within the group".

The Oxo Tower restaurant on London's South Bank, which had also been operated by Harvey Nichols since 1996, has been sold separately to the team behind Fallow. FTI said this would preserve more than 100 jobs and the operations of the business.

Lindsay Hallam, senior managing director at FTI, said: "From the outset, our focus was to find a solution that protected the underlying value of the business, securing a future for a 200-year-old retailer, delivering the best possible outcome for stakeholders."

Frasers has built a reputation for snapping up distressed brands through "pre-pack" administrations, which can leave creditors lumbered with unpaid debts. The position of creditors of Harvey Nichols, such as suppliers, landlords and HM Revenue & Customs, remains unclear.

Shares in Frasers closed up 13p, or 1.6 per cent, at 817½p in London following the deal, valuing the company at £3.6 billion.

Hot weather boost for Birkenstock

Simon Freeman

Birkenstock raised its full-year sales growth forecast and beat quarterly revenue estimates as demand for its high-end sandals benefited from record summer heatwaves around the world.

Strong pricing power and brand loyalty have helped companies such as Birkenstock that cater to wealthier consumers remain largely insulated from a reduction in discretionary spending affecting much of the sector.

Demand for the German shoemaker's sandals, clogs and closed-toe shoes was resilient in the quarter, while its expanding direct-to-consumer business and retail footprint helped drive growth across regions. Direct-to-consumer sales, made via its own stores and website, rose 14 per cent and accounted for nearly 39 per cent of quarterly revenue.

The Middle East conflict is still a source of uncertainty in the Gulf market, but the effect on the quarter was more contained than initially anticipated, the company said. Its Asia-Pacific sales rose 18 per cent during the quarter, while the Americas grew 11 per cent and Europe, the Middle East and Africa were up 15 per cent.

Birkenstock expects full-year revenue growth of 15 per cent to €2.3 billion, at the top end of an earlier forecast for a 13 to 15 per cent rise. Third-quarter revenue rose 13 per cent to €720 million.

The company debuted its shares in New York in 2023 in a richly valued $46-a-share initial public offering, where it pitched itself as a 250-year-old sandal maker reborn as a modern European luxury brand, competing with Nike, Crocs and Skechers and collaborating with the likes of Dior and Manolo Blahnik. Those hopes were boosted by a starring role in *Barbie*, the season's cinema blockbuster.

Yet the shares flopped on day one, falling 13 per cent as investors bristled at its $8.6 billion valuation. It was the worst first-day showing for a US listing of $1 billion or more in over two years, and the stock continued to slide to lows of about $35 as war, US trade tariffs and inflation eroded consumer confidence.

Since then, however, recovery has been steady if unspectacular. Resilient sales and demand have led to consistent double-digit revenue growth and industry-leading gross margins. Of the 22 analysts covering the stock, 17 rate the shares a buy and the consensus price target is $52.90.

Doubts remain, however, including concerns that the brand may be losing its premium positioning.

Alexandre Arnault, one of the scions of Bernie Arnault's LVMH luxury empire, resigned from the board this month citing professional commitments. The board is seeking a replacement.

The shares closed up $4.26, or 11.6 per cent, at $41 in New York last night, valuing the business at $7.5 billion.

Anthropic eyes record valuation at IPO

Continued from page 33

released its Kimi K3 model last month, which performed on par with Anthropic's models on many tasks at a fraction of the cost. OpenAI has also cut the price of its models, leading Anthropic to drop planned price increases.

Azeem Azhar, founder of Exponentia View, a research group, said that some of Anthropic's recent actions had felt "reactive rather than strategic". He said: "Its decision not to raise prices on models like Sonnet felt reactive given the market pressures. It's facing all this competition from cheaper open-source models, as well as OpenAI's own price cuts."

Data from Ramp, a payments company that tracks corporate spending on AI, also suggests that while Anthropic's market share among US businesses has continued to grow, corporate adoption of Fable 5, its most expensive model, has been slow.

According to Ramp, Fable 5 made up only 6 per cent of tokens businesses purchased from Anthropic over the past month. Despite it being Anthropic's most expensive model by far, it accounted for only 11.4 per cent of spending on Anthropic models.

Ara Kharazian, the lead economist at Ramp, said the data pointed to "cracks in the AI thesis". "With Fable 5, we've found a new upper bound for how much businesses are willing to spend on AI," Kharazian said. "More performance is not worth the price tag."

Azhar said Ramp's data suggested that many businesses were struggling to identify clear use cases for the most powerful models.

"This technology has evolved faster than the capacity of customers to make sense of it," he said. "Fable is expensive, but it's also very powerful, which makes it hard to use. Ordinary companies cannot guarantee that if they're spending $10 on a million tokens, then they're getting $11 back. The business case is harder to make."

Aston Martin has pulled a fast one

BUSINESS COMMENTARY *Alistair Osborne*

Not for nothing is Aston Martin James Bond's favourite car company. Anyone could have spotted that just by the 007 times in its 113-year history it's gone bust — and all before it's spent eight years as a UK-listed business flirting with 008.

Still, who knew the board, headed by its billionaire executive chairman Lawrence Stroll, would make the title of one of the films its operating manual of choice: *Live and Let Die*?

Having removed £1.05 billion from the London market at 2018's float, when a dozen banks starring JP Morgan Cazenove, Deutsche Bank and Goldman Sachs drove up the valuation to a ludicrous £4.33 billion, the company set out on a delightful trip finding different ways to do in the shareholders.

The result? After adjusting for a 1-for-20 share consolidation and endless financial refuellings totalling £1.6 billion-plus, they have now lost 99 per cent of their money, with the group today valued at £357 million.

Indeed, since Stroll turned the company into a plaything for a few rich owners — him with 33 per cent, China's Geely and Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, each with 14 per cent, and Mercedes Benz, with 8 per cent — the business has operated like a financial black hole on wheels, suckering in new punters to help fund the habitual cash-calls.

Even so, who'd have guessed what Stroll & co are up to now: seemingly trying to do in the bondholders, too. They're the owners of £1.3 billion of debt, secured against the assets of the company. So, it's no big shock that they're threatening legal action as a result of this: discovering that Aston Martin has transferred key though undisclosed assets, said to include the company's name, to a Cayman Islands business. Not only that; it then used them as collateral to borrow £450 million from HPS Investment Partners, a BlackRock-owned private credit provider that has a stake in the Stroll-owned Aston Martin Formula 1 team.

Plus, potentially, £100 million more if the carmaker hands a 50.1 per cent stake in its "non-automotive" brand rights, such as for clothing featuring the winged Aston Martin logo, to Authentic Brands, US owner of the likes of Reebok, Dockers and Billabong.

Since the revelation of Aston Martin's deliberately sketchy disclosure of this little wheeze a fortnight ago, the price of the bondholders' debt has plunged from about 80 cents in the dollar to 56 cents, with the ratings agency Fitch downgrading it to an even lower class of junk — CCC. In its view, Aston Martin's move "has significantly diluted the security position of the company's existing senior secured bondholders".

Yes, the bondholders are grown-ups and no one told them to invest in a financial car crash like Aston Martin. Yet such shenanigans look a first for the London market. As one source close to the bondholders put it, not only are they highly "aggressive" but raise wider issues for the supervision of UK public companies that investors expect to be a "gold standard for governance".

Hence, one question: what does Aston Martin's senior independent director, Sir Nigel Boardman, make of all this? He spent 37 years as a partner at the law firm Slaughter & May, so would know that this sort of frowned-on asset heist was first tried by the US clothing retailer J Crew about a decade ago. The result is that bondholder contracts now have "J Crew blockers" only dodgy companies try to get round. Is Boardman happy in that club?

Aston Martn insists "the transaction is fully permitted by the terms of the bond financing agreements", while risibly claiming that it "bolsters the group's financial position" to the "benefit" of "all our stakeholders". Try telling that to the bondholders, who had offered their own refinancing fix before the board sprung a J Crew on them. They're revving up for a legal fight under both contract law and section 423 of the Insolvency Act: the bit on "transactions defrauding creditors".

One other question: is this a ruse by Aston Martin to drive down the price of the debt before strong-arming the bondholders into a low-ball restructuring — en route to taking the company private at a knockdown price? If so, you hope the courts can see through that sort of gambit. UK-listed companies should not be on a mission to make sure their debtholders, as one Bond film puts it, *Die Another Day*.

Avant 'avin' a laugh

Apparently, the government is skint. Still, who cares about that? What better use for our dwindling funds than bailing out Avant, the housebuilder owned by that nice Elliott hedge fund, home to $80 billion of assets, that's chaired by a certain Jeff Fairburn: the ex-Persimmon boss of £82 million bonus fame?

Even better, here's the reason ministers have come to their aid — because they claim the loss-making Avant can't afford its £113 million bill to fix dangerous cladding on buildings arising from new laws after the Grenfell fire that killed 72 people. The result, as Avant's latest accounts show? It has "entered into a payment plan agreement" with the housing department, where the taxpayer will pick up the tab, with Avant leisurely paying us back over an unspecified period.

What do you think of that? The same, probably, as Dean Finch, the Persimmon boss: "I do think it's pretty outrageous that the British government is bailing out one of the richest American private equity houses." Too right. Shareholders in other housebuilders have had to cough up: why can't Elliott and the minted Fairburn? As Finch noted, it's shocking that the repayment terms and interest rate, assuming there is one, are being kept secret.

Indeed, ask if Elliott had threatened to put the company into administration if the government didn't play ball and the Avant camp doesn't deny it. But who says it won't do that later anyway, with the taxpayer never getting repaid?

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Business

Canary Wharf landlord back in black

Ben Martin Financial Editor

A revival of Canary Wharf, fuelled partly by rising demand for office space in London's Docklands, has helped the landlord behind the financial district swing back to a profit in the first half of the year.

Canary Wharf Group yesterday reported a £176.3 million profit for the six months to the end of June, reversing the £33 million loss from a year earlier. It was boosted by a rise in the value of its properties, and booked a £108.4 million increase that it said reflected "the impact of new lettings across both the office and retail portfolios and improved market conditions".

It cements a remarkable reversal of fortunes for the landlord, which oversees a £5.8 billion portfolio, is led by boss Shobi Khan and is owned by the Qatar Investment Authority, the sovereign wealth fund, and Brookfield, a Canadian investment group.

The outlook for the office district had looked grim when the coronavirus crisis erupted in 2020, forcing a shift to working from home that left many offices virtually empty.

Even after the pandemic receded, flexible working remained a feature for many businesses, prompting some to cut their office estates.

This hit Canary Wharf, where several of the district's big-name tenants announced they were moving back to the City of London. They included the FTSE 100 bank HSBC, which set out plans to leave its 45-storey headquarters in the Docklands by 2027, and the law firm Clifford Chance, two exits that helped to stoke speculation that Canary Wharf could struggle in the new era of hybrid working.

Yet it is now enjoying a comeback. This has been driven by a shortage of prime office space in the City and the West End, as well as by employers urging staff to return to the office for more of the week.

HSBC has partially reversed its plan to leave Canary Wharf by taking space elsewhere in the district after worries that its new headquarters in the City lacked enough desk space.

Revolut, the fast-growing financial technology group, recently moved into a new, bigger Canary Wharf headquarters, as has Zopa, an online bank. PwC, the Big Four accountancy firm, last month said it had chosen the district for its new UK head office. Visa is moving its European headquarters to Canary Wharf from Paddington.

GETTY IMAGES; NEIL HALL/EPA

The east London district has been boosted by a shortage of prime office space in the City and the opening of leisure facilities such as the Sea Lanes swimming pool

JP Morgan Chase, which is America's biggest lender and has a significant presence in London, has further boosted Canary Wharf's prospects by setting out plans last November to build a new three million sq ft skyscraper that will house up to 12,000 of its employees.

Efforts made by Canary Wharf Group in recent years to improve the district's appeal have given the area another boost. These have included new restaurants, bars and cafés, and leisure activities including The Cube, an immersive entertainment venue, and Sea Lanes, an open-air swimming pool that began operations in June.

Revenues at the landlord rose by 5 per cent year-on-year to £259.1 million in the first half, buoyed by a 4.2 per cent increase in office rental income to £115 million, mainly accounted for by HSBC and Zopa taking occupancy of their new sites. Retail rental income was up 3.5 per cent to £38.3 million.

The accounts showed that Canary Wharf Group last month sold the office building 1-5 Bank Street, which is home to Societe Generale, the French lender, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, to its own investors for £625 million.

This transaction with affiliates of Brookfield and the Qatar Investment Authority allowed Canary Wharf Group to repay £453.5 million of debt and left the landlord with net proceeds of £168.2 million.

It followed a deal in June in which Barclays agreed to buy the 32-storey skyscraper that houses its headquarters from Canary Wharf Group for £750 million.

The £108.4 million increase to the value of its portfolio did not include the Barclays deal, which the landlord said had resulted in a separate £34.4 million gain on disposal and had further boosted its profits in the first half.

Profits at CK Hutchison leap thirtyfold

Chris Dorrell
Technology Business Correspondent

The conglomerate founded by the Hong Kong billionaire Li Ka-shing recorded a 30-fold increase in profit in the first half of the year, driven by the sale of a string of its UK businesses.

Reported earnings at CK Hutchison jumped 3,000 per cent to $3.4 billion in the first six months of 2026 from $108 million in the same period last year. Revenue increased 6.1 per cent to $32.5 billion, primarily due to the strong performance of its ports division.

The Hong Kong-listed conglomerate sold its interest in UK Power Networks, the UK's largest electricity distribution network operator, to France's Engie in May. It also sold Eversholt Rail, a rolling stock leasing firm, in January.

The company booked gains of $2.3 billion from the two sales. "The group's liquidity and financial profile was significantly strengthened with the cash proceeds arising from the disposals," it said.

Alongside these disposals, Hutchison agreed to sell its 49 per cent stake in VodafoneThree for £4.3 billion in May. The venture launched in May 2025 after finally securing approval from the Competition and Markets Authority. Many analysts had expected it to hold onto its stake for longer.

$3.4bn
Earnings in the first half
Source: CK Hutchison

The sale completed in July, and Hutchison said it will book a $751.8 million gain on the sale in the second half of the year. Stripping out the impact of the asset sales, as well as the UK telecoms business, underlying profit increased 6 per cent to $1.6 billion.

Over the last few years the firm has been undergoing a strategic shift, prioritising balance sheet strength as it navigates "exceptionally turbulent times".

It said its books were now significantly strengthened as a result of the strategic transactions, with its net debt to net capital ratio falling to a record low of 8.1 per cent. Cash and equivalents rose 25 per cent to $22.8 billion.

Victor Li, the company's chairman and the son of Li Ka-Shing, said the first half of the year had been "exceptionally turbulent and uncertain".

"Geopolitical tensions, most notably the US-Iran war and repeated disruptions to shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, triggered significant volatility in commodity prices, renewed inflationary pressures and weaker growth forecasts globally.

"Despite relatively buoyant equity markets, future uncertainty weighed heavily on consumer sentiment and increased cost pressures," he said.

Reform jail threat for Voda execs over migrants' Sims

Jessica Newman

Reform UK has launched an attack on Vodafone's British business for donating Sim cards to a refugee charity.

According to the latest Care4Calais's annual report it received 2,500 Sim cards loaded with six months of free data from VodafoneThree, the UK arm of the FTSE 100 telecoms giant, in the year to the end of September.

The report said 2,221 of those Sim cards were distributed to migrants staying at the former RAF airfield at Wethersfield, near Braintree in Essex, which supported more than 2,500 individuals over the period who lived at the site. About 1,100 men were housed at the base at any one time, it said.

Zia Yusuf, Reform UK's home affairs spokesman, has demanded the company terminate its relationship with Care4Calais and cancel all Sim cards issued. Should Reform UK win an election, he warned that Vodafone's chief executive and board members "could face criminal sanctions and prison if the company knowingly facilitates illegal entry". He also said the party would remove Vodafone government contracts.

Yusuf said he has written to Margherita Della Valle, Vodafone's boss, and the group's directors, demanding the company hand over tracking data from the Sim cards to the British and French authorities "to help combat illegal Channel crossings".

A spokesman for VodafoneThree said the company's programme "provides mobile Sims to registered UK charities for distribution in Britain.

"Participating charities are regulated by the Charity Commission. All calls, texts and data are for UK use only."

Rhymer Rigby

Why being good at your job can be bad for your career

A friend who does interim work in senior positions was recently complaining about his current gig. "It's incredible, if I want to get anything done here, I have to do it myself," he said. "My job is not operations or logistics or HR or IT but I constantly find myself doing these things." The problem, he explained, is that those who are meant to be performing these functions are so bad or slow that it is usually quicker and less frustrating to do the task himself.

I shrugged and replied: "That's the problem with being competent."

I was being glib, but I've always been fascinated by this — the idea that being good at your job is not necessarily good for you and your career. In fact, once you start looking, there are numerous, well-documented drawbacks to being competent. These range from not getting promoted (the competency trap) to burnout via competency creep (like my friend, you end up doing everything). My umbrella term for these is the competency curse.

The competency trap is probably the best known downside. Here, people make themselves indispensable in their roles — and that means they never get out of them. Why would a boss promote the person who is amazing with finance software when their being amazing at finance software is a key part of the team's success? Perhaps the best-known example of this is super-competent administrators. People (often middle-aged women) who ensure whole departments run smoothly but are kept in lowly support roles because only they know how everything works.

If this sounds bad, the competency curse gets weirder. Being great at your job can also make you invisible. You get to the point where your baseline for performance is excellence. You are given the most difficult and demanding tasks because everyone knows you can do them. But because you create no friction you get little time with your manager. Your appraisals barely need doing (but can be oddly lacklustre because you don't obviously improve). You do far more than others but become a high-performing part of the furniture. Meanwhile, less competent (but far more visible) colleagues get noticed and get promoted.

So is the solution to be visible? Not so fast. Charismatic, high-profile competent people can often suffer too — because they attract heavy workloads. This is something I explore in my forthcoming book, *The TV MBA: Business Lessons from Popular Culture*.

The 2000s TV series *Lost* follows the travails of a group of plane-crash survivors on a mysterious tropical island. It is clear from the first episode that leading man Jack Shephard has an extremely useful skill — a passenger jet has fallen from the sky, dozens are dead and injured and he is a doctor. Thus, he spends much of the first episode running around, tending to the wounded and saving lives.

Then something interesting happens. Because he is so visibly competent, the group start to see Jack as a leader and even a saviour — and so they begin asking him to make all their decisions and solve all their problems. At first he is flattered — who doesn't like to be asked for their input? But soon he's swamped because everybody runs everything past him. He becomes a kind of "servant-leader" and a peculiar variant of the maxim: "If you want something done, ask a busy person." Worse, he gets very stressed and begins to struggle to help the wounded. Obviously, this is sub-optimal because he is the only doctor on the island whereas any number of not very busy people are capable of deciding who goes to find the smoke monster in the jungle.

I like *Lost*'s nuanced take on competence. We live in an era of "competency porn" — where those who are technically good at their jobs are celebrated as heroic problem solvers, in a way that is almost titillating. You see this in TV shows such as the medical drama *The Pitt* and *The West Wing*. Perhaps the most famous example is the film *The Martian*, where stranded astronaut Mark Watney does little but improvise ingenious solutions for two and a half hours. Although, to be fair to Watney, he is stranded on Mars and his nearest colleagues are millions of miles away, so he needs to be a competent jack of all trades.

Back on Earth, where you have to work with other (often less useful) people, the competent don't always help themselves. They frequently say yes to every request (because they want to help and it's flattering). They will do tasks themselves rather than train others (because it's easier in the short run and they like control). And when they're good at something, they may do more of it and hyper-specialise, increasing their indispensability. Thus, unmoderated competence can curse you as a generalist and an expert and as an invisible and highly visible person.

So, what is the solution? Competent people have to learn to say "no", set boundaries and be less agreeable. They may need to shout about their achievements and perhaps focus on a couple of areas that are seen as the most promotable. They should teach others to do what they do, rather than jealously guarding their skills. And they should perhaps be a little more political and even be strategically incompetent where it serves them well. Bosses have work to do here. too. They need to performance manage those who are good at their jobs, just as they manage those who are not delivering. And, crucially, they need to recognise that, while promoting indispensably competent people may cause short-term pain, in the long term it is a gain for everyone.

Of course if none of this works, the ultimate move for the cursed competent is to leave (or at least threaten to), which often focuses others' minds wonderfully on just how much they do.

Rhymer Rigby is a journalist and author. His book The TV MBA is out on October 29

JLR sales fall 9% in quarter as woes endure

Robert Lea Industrial Editor

Jaguar Land Rover's run of misfortune shows no sign of slowing, with geopolitical fallout from the US-Iran conflict compounding recent blows from a fire at a parts supplier, a major cyberattack, and President Trump's trade tariffs.

Revenue at Britain's largest car manufacturer, owned by India's Tata Motors, fell by more than 9 per cent to £6 billion in the quarter to the end of June. That sent underlying profits down to £109 million, from £351 million in the same quarter last year.

The quarterly performance was particularly weak given that it runs up against the spring of 2025, when carmakers were sent reeling by Trump's import tariffs. This time around, the company said sales were impacted by "market disruption linked to the conflict in the Middle East."

That came on top of the longer-than-expected impact on sales after a temporary shutdown at its main Solihull plant in the West Midlands in the spring following a fire at Raufoss, a Norwegian supplier of aluminium chassis parts.

Sales have also been impacted by Jaguar's decision to stop producing some diesel and petrol-run models, as it transitions to focus on electric vehicles.

The poor start to JLR's year followed a troubled 2025-26, when profits came in at just £14 million. Much of that was blamed on a near two-month shutdown of production because of a cybersecurity breach last August.

This week JLR chairman Natarajan Chandrasekaran announced that he had quit after falling out with Noel Tata, a scion of the multibillionaire Indian Tata family whose interests own JLR.

"Despite the near-term industry challenges, we continue to see strong demand for our brands," JLR's chief executive PB Balaji insisted.

Balaji was parachuted in from Tata headquarters last year to take control of JLR following a longer-than-expected interregnum in which JLR's finance director Adrian Mardell stepped up to the top job after the departure of Thierry Bollore. Bollore was the architect of a decision to turn the Jaguar marque into an all-electric luxury brand, a transition running nearly two years late.

JLR said: "A combination of the recently announced growth objectives and the exciting product launches due in coming months leaves JLR in good shape whilst acknowledging the geopolitical, inflationary and regulatory challenges the industry faces."

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IN MANCHESTER/SHUTTERSTOCK

Pubs welcomed the extra trading hours resulting from England's deep run

Economic growth slows despite World Cup boost

Jack Barnett Economics Correspondent

The UK economy expanded by 0.4 per cent in the second quarter, driven by growth in the all-important services industry, while GDP in June was boosted by the start of the World Cup and the scorching weather.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) said on Thursday that growth had slowed from 0.6 per cent in the first quarter of the year. Analysts had predicted that GDP would expand by 0.4 per cent in the three months to June.

On a monthly basis, output in June rose by 0.3 per cent, much better than analysts expected. GDP had flatlined in May, a downward revision from the ONS's previous estimate of growth of 0.1 per cent in the month. High temperatures and the beginning of the World Cup helped to lift output in June, particularly at pubs, bars and restaurants as fans gathered to watch games. The Met Office estimated that it was the second warmest June on record.

Liz McKeown, director of economic statistics at the ONS, said: "Services were once again the main driver of growth, while production was broadly unchanged and construction also grew. Within services, computer programming and advertising continued to perform strongly, as they have done throughout the year, while wholesale was a notable area of weakness."

Services activity was estimated by the ONS to have risen by 0.5 per cent in the second quarter of the year, following growth of 0.8 per cent in the first quarter. Compared with the same period last year, services GDP was estimated to be 1.5 per cent higher.

Production output flatlined in the three months to June, compared with an increase of 0.2 per cent in the previous three months. Construction output rose by 0.3 per cent in Q2.

The reduction in growth over the second quarter was influenced by the sharp rise in global energy costs during the period because of the war in the Middle East. Oil prices exceeded $100 a barrel over the period.

Chancellor John Healey said: "I know people are worried about the impact of the conflict in the Middle East on their cost of living, which ... has added pressure on British businesses. This is an active, hands-on government, putting British interests first — giving breathing space to those feeling the strain, making our country more resilient and bringing hope back."

In the first half of the year the UK posted the strongest growth in the G7 — a record seized upon by former chancellor Rachel Reeves as it came under her watch. In a post on X, Reeves said: "Strong growth numbers for the first half of the year. This was not inevitable. It is because of the resilience of the British economy and the responsible action taken since the election."

She added: "Lots done, more to do."

Analysts said that the economy had held up well despite challenges posed by the Gulf conflict.

Yael Selfin, chief economist at KPMG UK, said: "Despite higher energy prices and geopolitical uncertainty ... weighing on confidence, stronger than expected activity among households and businesses helped sustain growth."

Ruth Gregory, deputy chief UK economist at Capital Economics, said: "The the economy weathered the energy shock well but with inflation yet to peak, we doubt this strength will last. We expect GDP to stagnate in the third quarter and grow only modestly in the fourth."

Economists at the Bank of England think that output will stall in the current quarter.

After the release of the figures the pound dropped by 0.12 per cent against the dollar to $1.34, and the yield on ten-year government bonds was flat.

Behind the story

As people flocked to pubs to watch England top their group in the first stage of the World Cup, beating Croatia and Panama in the process, they helped the economy to a surprise victory (Jack Barnett writes).

It is probably true that GDP growth would have come very close to flatlining or stalling altogether had there been no tournament in the month. Goodness knows what would have happened if England had crashed out in the group stages.

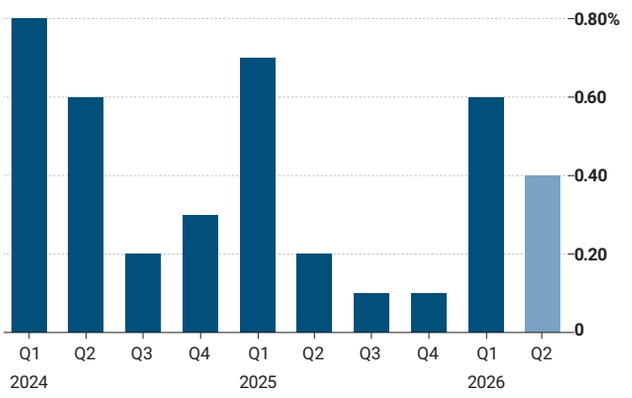
England's performance was the best since the country won the tournament 60 years ago and probably means that growth got a boost in July too. Those figures are released on September 11.

Pubs hailed the extra trading hours as England fans boozed late into the night (and early morning) after defeating the co-hosts Mexico 3-2 on July 6. Similar celebrations were repeated when the team beat Norway 2-1 on July 11.

The hot weather helped the economy too, lifting retail spending. Could you imagine the boost to growth if England did lift the World Cup once again?

UK economy slows

Quarterly GDP



Source: ONS

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Secretive billionaire launches takeover of Sweden's Evolution

Martin Strydom, Jessica Newman

The billionaire Kenneth Dart has launched a mandatory takeover offer for the Swedish gaming software maker Evolution AB to comply with strict market rules.

Dart's Candle Lake investment vehicle has offered SwKr 695 a share, which values Evolution at about SwKr 132 billion (£10 billion), below the current market price of SwKr 733.

The offer matches the price Candle Lake paid when it increased its holding to just over 30 per cent of the Stockholm-listed company in July, triggering Sweden's mandatory takeover rules. Under the rules, if a company's stake exceeds 30 per cent it must make an offer for the rest of the shares at the price it paid or reduce its stake to below the threshold.

Candle Lake, which owns 30.02 per cent of Evolution, said the holding was a long-term financial investment. It added that it does not intend to "acquire the entire company or to make changes to its operations, management or workforce".

James Wheatcroft, an analyst at Jefferies said: "Candle Lake's bid below the current share price is designed to fulfil stock exchange requirements, rather than a desire to own all the outstanding shares in Evolution. The bid does seem to imply that Candle Lake would like to own more shares in Evolution.

"Our understanding is that ... Candle Lake could launch the offer expecting few shareholders to tender. After that, Candle Lake is 'grandfathered', ie [it] can opportunistically further increase the stake in Evolution without again triggering a mandatory bid."

Dart, 71, has been investing in betting companies after selling down large holdings in two of the world's biggest tobacco firms.

Through Candle Lake, Dart is the largest shareholder in Flutter Entertainment, the gambling company behind Paddy Power, FanDuel and Betfair, owning an 18.6 per cent stake, according to FactSet.

Profile

Kenneth Dart is a self-styled "investor, innovator, explorer and entrepreneur" who has a secretive reputation in the Cayman Islands (Alex Ralph writes).

The scion of the US Dart Container foam cups family business, he has amassed a vast portfolio of businesses in the tax haven. His wealth is estimated at $3.7 billion by Forbes.

Dart moved from the US to Grand Cayman in the 1990s and has built a global investment empire spanning hospitality, retail, entertainment, finance, biotech and property.

Described by some as a "vulture investor" for buying up government debt and launching lawsuits, he has a reclusive reputation among locals on the islands.

A New York Times article in 2019 said Dart was believed to be the largest private landowner on the archipelago. Locals compared him with Batman and Warren Buffett. He has invested more than $1.5 billion in the islands.

In recent years he built large stakes in British American Tobacco and Imperial Brands, but began to sell down last year.

Dart profited from a rebound in cigarette and vape-makers after bumper share buybacks and dividend payments. Research for The Times by Panmure Liberum, the City bank, in 2024 estimated that he had made a £3.8 billion return from his holdings in BAT and Imperial.

The acceptance period is expected to run from August 17 to September 15. Completion would be subject to any necessary regulatory approvals.

Evolution was established in 2006 by Jens von Bahr, Fredrik Österberg and Richard Hadida. The company develops and licenses software for online casino operators.

Last month Evolution agreed a £4.75 million settlement with the UK Gambling Commission after the regulator concluded that its games were found to be accessible to British customers through unlicensed operators.

Evolution said it had terminated its commercial agreements with two casino operators running six unlicensed websites offering content to UK players.

Martin Carlesund, Evolution's chief executive, said at the time: "We do not want traffic from unlicensed operators and will always move quickly to address any such situation."

A spokesman for Evolution declined to comment on the takeover proposal.

Entain gets on high horse over betting shop reforms

Jessica Newman
Leisure Industries Correspondent

ALAN CROWHURST/GETTY IMAGES

The Ladbrokes owner, led by Stella David, has 2,300 betting shops that may be affected by Andy Burnham's plans

The boss of the gambling group behind Ladbrokes and Coral has hit back at Andy Burnham's plans to tighten rules around the opening of new betting shops, arguing that traditional bookmakers should not be lumped together with high-stakes gambling arcades.

Stella David, chief executive of Entain, said the government needed to "be very careful not to bundle our great traditional betting shops" with adult gaming centres, which have a "very different style and tone".

The prime minister pledged to bring high streets "back to life" this week, announcing measures to give local councils the power to block gambling, gaming and vaping shops.

Adult gaming centres, which offer 24-hour gambling machines, have expanded across the country in recent years at a time when traditional high street bookies have continued to decline.

The Betting and Gaming Council said the number of betting shops in Britain had fallen by more than a third since 2019, and about 3,000 shops had closed. The number of adult gaming centres, which offer high-stakes gaming machines such as digital slot and fruit machines, rose 7 per cent to 1,451 between 2022 and 2024, according to the Gambling Commission. Entain has about 2,300 betting shops.

An industry source said that although reforms to the Gambling Act's "aim to permit" rule, which restricts council powers to refuse applications even where there is public opposition, will cover betting shops, they are likely to focus on adult gaming centres. In a video posted on X, Burnham singled out vape shops and gaming centres when talking about new powers given to councils.

Michael Snape, Entain's finance boss, said the company's shops "provide a safe place for people to gamble. We are very strict about underage people not coming in, unlike a lot of adult gaming centres, and we pay higher taxes.

"If you look at other operators who perhaps don't pay taxes and don't do anything for player safety, that's where the problem is," he said.

The Betting and Gaming Council said it was wrong for the government to "lump highly regulated, licensed betting shops together with rogue or criminal businesses".

Entain started as GVC Holdings in 2004 under Kenny Alexander and has grown into one of the biggest betting businesses in the world. It owns betting brands such as BetCity, Coral and Eurobet, as well as the gaming brands Foxy Bingo, Gala and Partycasino.

The FTSE 100 company reported that net gaming revenues in the six months to the end of June rose 5 per cent, ahead of management's expectations. Online net gaming revenues were up 7 per cent, helped by the World Cup. Twice as many first-time deposits came in to its sports arm during the tournament compared with the 2022 World Cup.

The company reported underlying operating profits of £479 million, 2 per cent down on the same period last year but ahead of analysts' expectations. The company stuck by its aim for online net gaming revenue to grow by between 5 per cent and 7 per cent this year and remained "comfortable" that it would be able to deliver underlying profits, excluding its US joint venture, of £934 million.

Shares in the company, which have fallen by almost a third this year, retreated another 14½p, or 2.6 per cent, to 545½p.

Rank warns against tax increases

Jessica Newman

The new boss of Rank Group has warned that any further increase in gambling taxes will put its bingo halls and casinos at risk of closure.

Richard Harris, chief executive of the company behind the Mecca Bingo and Grosvenor Casinos chains, said the company had paid more than £225 million in taxes and duties last year, and warned that any further tax rises will make the business less viable.

A recent report from the Social Market Foundation, a think tank, said that doubling machine gaming duty from 20 per cent to 40 per cent could increase the tax raised by between £275 million and £458 million.

Rank said the proposals fail to take into account the negative consequences of "inevitable venue closures, job losses and reduced tax receipts".

The FTSE 250 company's warning came as the group delivered full-year results showing a 6 per cent increase in like-for-like net gaming revenue to £834.1 million in the 12 months to the end of June.

Its digital business stood out, with underlying like-for-like net gaming revenues up 8 per cent to £248.5 million. Sales from Mecca Bingo venues rose 4 per cent. Sales at Enracha, its Spanish bingo outpost, were ahead by 7 per cent.

Rank said net gaming revenue at Grosvenor Casinos, its largest source of sales, was up 5 per cent to £397.3 million. It attributed the increase partly to the installation of 850 new gaming machines in 37 casinos last year.

However, Harris said that between April and June, its casinos in London lost between £150,000 and £200,000 a week due to "the absence of customers from the Middle East who would normally be in the UK over that period."

Underlying operating profits rose 21 per cent to £78.6 million, in line with management's previous outlook.

Looking ahead, Rank said net gaming revenue was up 8 per cent in the first six weeks of the current financial year, giving management confidence in its ambition to deliver at least £100 million in underlying operating profit in the medium term.

The shares closed up 6p, or 6 per cent, at 105¾p.

Business

Weekend workers 'pulling more

Labour reforms mean youngsters working just one day a week can get 80% of their pay, **Richard Tyler** writes

Young staff working just one day a week have started to call in sick as they can still receive 80 per cent of their wages, employers have claimed.

The government made sick pay more generous in April and included people working one or two shifts a week for the first time. Since then employers say they have seen an increase in young people calling in sick, prompting some to reduce the number of weekend jobs they provide.

Andy Burnham is prioritising job opportunities for Britain's one million young people not in employment, education or training (Neets). Employers say that changes to the government's employment rights legislation are required if the prime minister wants to avoid seeing more excluded from work.

The government revealed this week that the direct cost to employers of its separate proposals to reform zero hours contracts and shifts — often used to provide flexible casual work for young people — will be up to £2.9 billion a year. Hospitality and retail face being hit the hardest by the additional staffing costs, lost revenue and red tape.

Gordon Forster, who owns two indoor play centres called Safari Play in Milton Keynes and Peterborough employing 100 people, said some of his younger employees had begun to call in sick, aware that they would receive 80 per cent of their pay, and that the issue was industry-wide. "That is happening across the board," said Forster, who chairs the indoor leisure committee at the trade body UKHospitality.

"It will be another dagger in the back of young people. Technically they get another benefit, but employers like me go: 'I need reliable people, people who will definitely turn up. I need people who are not going to just do one day a week and then not turn up.'"

Under Labour's reforms, employees can claim statutory sick pay from the first day of their illness rather than the fourth. Ministers also scrapped a minimum earnings threshold that previously denied about 1.3 million people the benefit. This brought those aged 16 to 21 working Saturday or Sunday jobs into the scope of the regulations.

Employers say one factor is that statutory sick pay is calculated on a weekly basis, meaning those working one day then taking that day off sick disproportionately benefit from the reforms.

Cathy Dunlevy, founder of the Manchester indoor play centre group Head Over Heels, has raised the issue with her local Labour MP Jeff Smith, who she said was surprised to hear about the negative effect of the changes.

"It's something he was interested in and he did make a note of it," she said. "If you hire young adults who are in education and they only work, say, Saturday, and it's not their serious job and or serious career, if they take a day off because they don't feel well they get

80 per cent of what they would have been paid for that day. That may make employers more wary of hiring in that age group, which I think is a shame."

Forster said he employed 28 people under the age of 21, a number that has fallen in recent years as employment costs such as national insurance and the minimum wage have risen. "You want to be a good employer but what you don't want to do is get burdened by people who are either fraudulent or wanting a lazy day."

He said at least one employee working one day a week has called in sick three times in a row since April, meaning it was a month before he could call them in for a meeting. "Young people bring amazing things to the workplace. [But] you get to the stage where you think 'I'm not going through that again', so I am not employing young people."

The government has said its employment rights legislation will benefit more than 18 million employees and "make work pay for everyone".

In July, Burnham said he would create clear routes into employment for young people, part of his efforts to tackle the rising welfare bill. "Fixing the youth unemployment crisis in Britain will require a major shake-up in how we do things — and that's what this government will do," he said.

Statutory sick pay is set at £123.25 a week or 80 per cent of earnings, whichever is lower. The weekly total is then divided by each day the person is off sick, meaning full-time staff falling ill for five days are paid a lower daily rate than an employee who works just one day a week. Some employers choose to provide sick pay schemes that are more generous than the statutory minimum.

There are few safeguards in place in the UK to protect employers from fraudulent sick pay claims, in contrast to France and Germany. Sophie White, employment partner at law firm Eversheds Sutherland, said both countries are moving towards "greater scrutiny of sickness absence, with France introducing tighter anti-fraud measures and Germany proposing day-one certification requirements and restrictions on telephone sick notes".

In the UK, staff are not required to provide "fit notes" for illnesses that last seven days or less, and employers cannot require staff to secure one.

The government has said the sick pay changes will cost employers more than £400 million a year. Business groups estimate the figure to be far higher. The Federation of Small Businesses said the average cost of sickness absence to a small employer stood at £3,500 a year. With 1.4 million employers with fewer than 50 staff, the total cost to the economy is significant, and the FSB believes this year's reforms could double the cost to £10 billion a year.

Dunlevy is on the executive committee of the Association of Indoor Play and knows that to cut staff costs some of her peers are introducing more self-service. Head over Heels is resisting the pressure to reduce opportunities for young people.

"We still [hire young people] because we really enjoy developing and training them — some of our best team members started when they have been really quite young," she said. "They have that energy and that enthusiasm, particularly with working with children, and children can relate to them really well."

Cathy Dunlevy, a play centre group founder, said employers may become wary

Antofagasta downgrades copper forecast after floods

Emily Gosden Energy Editor

Severe rainfall that hit Chile last month forced Antofagasta to downgrade its copper production forecast for the year.

The FTSE 100 miner had to temporarily halt production at its Los Pelambres mine following "intense precipitation and intermittent power outages" that began on July 18 and resulted in Chile declaring a state of catastrophe.

The mine began to resume operations by July 23 and the company had initially left its full-year production guidance unchanged.

However, Antofagasta said on Tuesday that it was still ramping up production and had identified "the need for repairs to certain pipeline platforms and water management systems".

As a result, it now expects to produce between 625,000 to 655,000 tonnes of copper this year, down from a previous range of 650,000-700,000 tonnes.

Iván Arriagada, Antofagasta's chief executive, said the range reflected the fact Chile was only midway through the winter and there was the potential for more weather-related disruption owing to the impact of the El Nino weather phenomenon.

The production downgrade overshadowed half-year results for London's biggest pure-play copper miner. Revenues rose 18 per cent to $4.48 billion and earnings before interest, taxation, depreciation and amortisation (ebitda) gained 27 per cent to $2.84 billion, as higher prices offset lower production and higher costs.

18%
Rise in revenues to $4.48 billion
Source: Antofagasta

The price at which it sold copper was 36 per cent higher than in the same period of 2025, while its lucrative mining byproducts, gold and molybdenum, saw price increases of 46 per cent and 55 per cent, respectively.

Copper production was down 9 per cent at 285,000 tonnes in the first half.

Arriagada said it had seen inflationary pressures, particularly for fuel and sulphuric acid, as global markets were disrupted by the conflict in the Middle East. These prices had eased from their peak and were not expected to be so bad in the second half, he said.

Antofagasta operates the Los Pelambres mine, about 240km north of Santiago in central Chile, and the Centinela, Antucoya and Zaldívar mines, all much further north in the Antofagasta region.

Chile is the world's biggest producer of copper, the red metal that is in growing demand for electrification.

Like much of the world, Chile is experiencing more extreme weather conditions as climate change intensifies. Central Chile has been affected by drought for more than a decade and in January the country declared a state of catastrophe as wildfires ravaged its central and southern areas.

Last month it was forced to declare another state of catastrophe after torrential rain caused flash flooding and landslides in central areas. Drought-hardened land is less able to absorb rainfall making flash floods more likely.

Antofagasta's operations have long been affected by the drought, prompting it to build a desalination plant to enable it to use seawater for processing operations at Los Pelambres. It is expanding this plant's capacity.

It recently announced a planned $900 million investment in a water pipeline and pumping system to enable its Zaldívar mine to use "reprocessed wastewater from the city of Antofagasta" from mid 2028. It hopes this will pave the way to secure an extension of the mine's life until 2051.

Arriagada said its investments "position the group well to benefit from growing copper demand, driven by global trends including energy security, electrification ... and AI".

The shares, which have risen 82 per cent over the past year, fell 273p, or 6.8 per cent, to close at £37.56.

Savings rack up at Secure Trust Bank

Ben Martin Financial Editor

A revamp of Secure Trust Bank has gathered pace after the lender said its cost-cutting plan was going faster than expected.

The London-listed lender will book £13.5 million of savings this year, better than the £10 million it had previously anticipated.

Boss Ian Corfield, who was appointed a year ago, is overhauling the bank after selling Secure Trust's loss-making and capital-hungry motor finance unit — part of a plan to shift the group's focus towards its higher-returning business and retail finance divisions.

Offloading the vehicle loans business has already cut the lender's headcount from about 845 staff last summer to around 650 employees.

sickies', warn firms

ANTHONY DEVLIN FOR THE TIMES

of hiring young adults in the wake of changes to sick pay calculations as Andy Burnham, left, tackles the Neets crisis

Corfield is also trying to simplify the remaining group, partly through digitisation, but he said yesterday that this would not result in a similar "dramatic change in headcount".

He was speaking as the bank posted a bigger than expected 9.4 per cent rise in first-half adjusted pre-tax profits to £31.3 million that sent the lender's shares up 36p, or 2.3 per cent, to £16.04.

Solihull-based Secure Trust can trace its roots to 1952. It offers savings products, property finance and asset-based lending to businesses, as well as retail finance used by consumers to purchase goods and services such as furniture, electrical products, musical instruments and dental treatments.

Like other lenders, its former vehicle finance arm has been caught up in the ongoing mis-selling scandal that has engulfed the motor loans industry.

While LCM Partners, an investment firm, bought Secure Trust's business in this area for about £459 million in February, the bank remains on the hook for any consumer redress that might be owed. It last year set aside £21.5 million to cover the issue but has since used some of that provision, taking it down to £20.2 million, it said.

Infrastructure spending plans give Costain a boost

Robert Lea Industrial Editor

Major projects to upgrade Britain's water and electricity infrastructure will lift revenues and profits at Costain, the civil engineering firm promised.

Alex Vaughan, the chief executive who has spent the last seven years turning Costain around, said the time for talking about infrastructure investment had ended and that his company was at "an inflection point" that will see a "step change" in income, earnings and shareholder returns.

Following confirmation of City forecasts that revenues will increase by more than a fifth to £1.2 billion this year, and that profits are expected to grow by around a third over the next three years, shares in Costain pushed on to fresh post-pandemic highs.

They closed up 10p, or 4.6 per cent, at 229½p — 50 per cent higher than where they were at the start of the year and six times higher than at the depths of the Covid-19 crisis.

"We have won the work, we have spent time putting together the [construction] programmes and we are now delivering," said Vaughan.

In the first six months of the year the company reported a 3 per cent rise in revenues to £541 million, on which underlying operating profits were up by a similar amount at £19 million.

The money from all its construction jobs, however, begins to flow from now as the business converts its £7 billion order book — about six years' visibility of work — into cash and earnings.

Costain's confidence in its future saw it double the interim dividend to 2p, a trend that analysts expect to continue over the next three years.

Upgrading its target price to 270p from 245p, Panmure Liberum said: "We are bullish on UK infrastructure and are hopeful 'blockers' will be removed."

US investment puts Savills in position for expansion

Charlotte Bend

Shares in Savills have rallied after the property agent posted robust results despite global economic uncertainty hitting key markets.

Savills said that revenue was up 9 per cent year-on-year to £1.2 billion in the six months to the end of June and that underlying pre-tax profits rose 47 per cent to £34.3 million.

At a pre-tax level profits fell 56 per cent to £7 million as Savills paid out £6.7 million in fees related to its $1.1 billion acquisition of Eastdil Secured, the US property investment bank.

Shares in Savills rose 107p, or 11 per cent, to close at £10.88.

Simon Shaw, chief executive, said: "Looking forward, the enlarged group's pipelines are strong, and although transaction timelines are hard to predict in the current environment, I am confident that we are well positioned to deliver value to our clients, colleagues and shareholders."

Savills is thought of by many people as a traditional residential estate agent, but that makes up just a tenth of its business. Its agents broker sales of warehouses, find offices for businesses and line up deals for investors.

Many of its fees come from investment management, property management and its consultancy business.

While Savills is a well-known name in most parts of the world, its presence in the lucrative US market remained small. That is largely why Shaw and his predecessor, Mark Ridley, decided to acquire Eastdil Secured, which has offices in New York and Santa Monica as well as London, earlier this year.

Savills said that revenues from its work on commercial property transactions rose 19 per cent to £319 million in the period, with residential revenue up just 3 per cent to £132 million.

Savills has grown from a residential estate agent to a global business

Its commercial revenues were boosted by work on data centres and leasing office space. Savills said: "Overall there was a greater degree of caution in the UK market in Q2 with the escalation of the Middle East conflict and domestic political change in process. The pipeline of commercial transaction advisory work remains strong, positioning us well for the coming periods."

The residential business in the UK was impacted by Labour's new Renters' Rights Act, which has scrapped fixed-term rental agreements and means that landlords must give four months notice to tenants to end their lease.

Savills said this has led to an increase in landlords selling rental properties, resulting in a fall in available properties and putting upward pressure on rents.

Orsted says demand for offshore wind still strong

Emily Gosden

War in the Middle East and wildfires across Europe show the need to rapidly produce more renewable energy to improve resilience and tackle climate change, Orsted said.

The Danish offshore wind giant is emerging from a tough few years. The one-time stock market darling has struggled with rising costs, supply chain issues and setbacks in the United States, where the Trump administration has tried to thwart its projects.

Rasmus Errboe, Orsted chief executive, argued recent events showed that the long-term fundamentals for offshore wind remained strong.

High and volatile prices, driven by America's war on Iran, underlined "the importance of European energy independence", Errboe said, and presented "an opportunity to ramp up production of home-grown, affordable and reliable energy, so global shocks ... do not limit prosperity".

He added: "Renewable energy is central to this necessary transition and can additionally address the effects of the continued real climate change, most recently exemplified with the rising temperatures and wildfires across southern Europe this summer, further underscoring the need for a rapid energy transition acceleration."

Errboe was speaking as Orsted reported better than expected half-year results, with underlying earnings before deductions up 8 per cent to DKK 15 billion (£1.72 billion), boosted by higher wind speeds and higher prices.

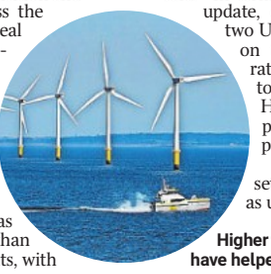
A year ago the company had to carry out a $9.4 billion rights issue, which it blamed on the Trump administration spooking would-be investors in one of its offshore wind farms, leaving it to foot the construction cost solo.

Orsted is continuing to build two wind farms off the US coast: Revolution Wind, which is 95 per cent complete, and Sunrise Wind, 50 per cent complete. Both were hit with "stop work" orders by the Trump administration last year but courts later granted injunctions allowing construction to continue as legal wrangling goes on.

In its results Orsted warned that "changes in the US regulatory environment can materially and further adversely affect the value of our US activities and could potentially lead us to cease development, which would result in further impairments and costs".

Jenny Ping, an analyst at Citigroup, said: "In terms of the operational update, construction of the two US offshore projects is on track, although the rate of progress appears to be very slow. UK Hornsea 3 also appears to be making progress.

"We largely see this set of results as business as usual."



Higher wind speeds have helped Orsted's results

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Pivot into pensions is paying off

STANDARD LIFE

Market cap	Customers
£9.1 billion	16 million

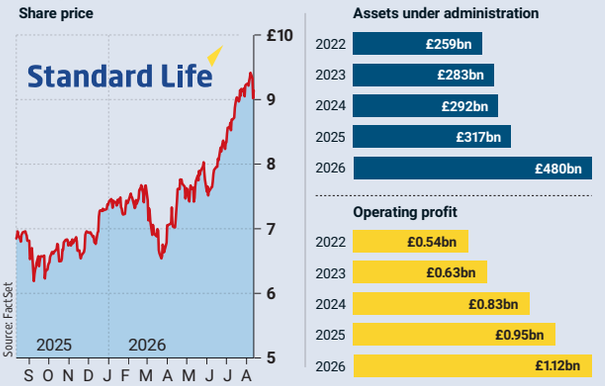
Standard Life has undergone a significant transformation this year. The group was rebranded from Phoenix Group and it announced the £2 billion acquisition of Aegon UK. Combined with strong cash generation and soaring stock markets lifting assets it is well placed to continue to grow.

The shares are up 25 per cent so far this year, and it looks like there should be more to come. The focus is now on expanding into the workplace and private pension market. The Aegon deal will bring with it a large team of financial advisers that can provide guidance to an underserved and growing market.

Long gone are the days of companies providing a final salary pension for life. Auto enrolment and company contributions now leave many largely to their own devices, managing a number of different pensions from different jobs.

The buyout of Aegon, expected to complete by the end of this year or early 2027, will bring total customers to 16 million and assets under administration to £480 billion. It will make the pensions and savings business, which manages defined-contribution workplace schemes, the largest profit generator. Retirement solutions, which operates defined-benefit schemes and annuities, will still be a major part of the business. There are also operations in Ireland and Germany, and the legacy with-profits pensions and savings business.

Setting the standard



ADVICE Hold
WHY Clear strategy for how excess cash is going to grow the business

The FTSE 100 group built itself up by hoovering up UK life assurance groups such as Pearl, Sun Life, Abbey Life, ReAssure and the Standard Life part of Aberdeen. This flurry of dealmaking, fuelled by borrowing, meant debt rose to £4 billion by the end of 2022. The change in fortunes for the UK's life assurance industry has been dramatic since then.

A small army of actuaries is needed to work out the exact movements. That said, a good rule of thumb is that a sharp rise in yields on long-dated UK gilts results in a fall in the amount of cash that life insurance funds are liable to pay out. The benchmark UK 10-year gilt yield is up from 1.17 per cent at the start of 2022 to 5 per cent by the end of July. At the same time the investments into which the cash premiums collected from customers have been placed have been on a strong run.

At the end of last year, Standard Life's adjusted operating profit was up 15 per cent to £945 million and operating cash generation was up 4 per cent to £1.47 billion. Analysts at Berenberg think that the continued strong cash generation means debts will have reduced to £2.9 billion by the end of June.

The best deals in life assurance look to be over and the bulk purchase annuity business, whereby a huge number of companies have offloaded their defined benefit schemes as they swung to a surplus, slowed last year. Group management is confident it will hit £1.1 billion in adjusted operating profit for the year end and that all gives plenty of room for manoeuvre on growth, or increasing returns to shareholders through dividends and buybacks.

The reported results are always much lumpier as they include non-cash items such as writing off goodwill from previous acquisitions, or the performance of financial instruments used to protect the assets under administration.

The shares have had an excellent run and are well up on when Tempus recommended buying them at 692p in early December as the market had overlooked the potential from the new strategy. They closed at 920½p yesterday. The dividend yield is no longer as obviously attractive as it was, sitting at 6.3 per cent, down from 8 per cent.

But the strategy is much clearer, the balance sheet is stronger and the potential to improve returns to shareholders is greater. The half-year results due on September 7 will give an update on current trading, and the capital markets day due on November 30 will provide a clearer picture of the distribution strategy for next year and beyond.

There are always risks for insurers of being exposed to a sharp pullback in the markets, or another tax grab targeting pension savings. But the underlying business here is forecast to generate prodigious amounts of cash for the coming three years. That, when combined with the firepower of becoming the second-largest provider of pensions, means we are happy to run this winner.

FTSE 100 falls 0.6% in disappointing session

MARKET REPORT

The FTSE 100 was always going to struggle for a positive session when 18 of its largest members had shares trading without the right to the next dividend payment (Robert Miller writes).

By the close, London's main index was in the red for a fourth consecutive day after a fall of 60.48 points, or 0.6 per cent, to 10,772.67, the lowest closing value since July 24. Among those trading ex-dividend and contributing to the loss were **HSBC**, down 12p, or 0.8 per cent, at £15.26, **London Stock Exchange,** which shed 141p, or 1.6 per cent, to £85.56, and **Babcock International**, off 18½p, or 1.5 per cent, at £11.82.

It was not all doom and gloom. **Lion Finance Group**, the former Bank of Georgia, topped the leaderboard with a gain of 660p, or 5.2 per cent, to £133.80 after announcing a share buyback, followed by **British American Tobacco**, a favoured defensive stock, up 114p, or 2.8 per cent, to £42.64.

Housebuilders were also in favour after resilient UK GDP growth and an easing of fears about higher interest rates. Britain's biggest housebuilder **Barratt Redrow** stepped up with a rise of 7½p, or 2.4 per cent, to 328½p with **Persimmon** 26p, or 2.2 per cent, higher at £11.96. A shout out too for **Computacenter**, one of London's few tech stocks, which benefited from the resurgence of interest in artificial intelligence-related companies and closed up 110p, or 2.3 per cent, at £49.38.

A tier below, the more UK-focused FTSE 250 finished up again and briefly touched a new intraday high before paring some of the gains to close up 22.83 points, or 0.1 per cent, at 24,837.71 compared with last Friday's record of 24,854.86. Best performer was **Savills**, up 107p, or 10.9 per cent, at £10.88 after the property agent posted robust results despite global uncertainty. Next up was **Rank Group**, 6p, or 6 per cent, higher at 105¾p following good annual figures from the owner of the Mecca Bingo and Grosvenor Casino chains.

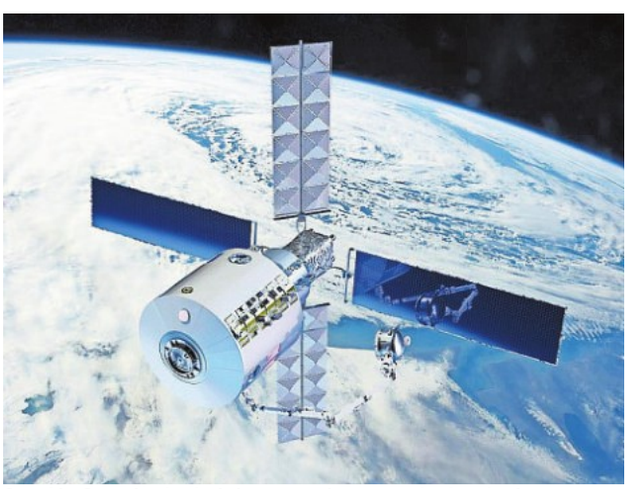
Seraphim Space Investment Trust had a fairly hefty drop of 7p, or 3.6 per cent, to 186¾p. The trust has begun to deploy funds from its £137 million C-share fundraising into holdings such as Pixxel, a space data company and spacecraft manufacturer, according to Citywire. There is a strong possibility the fall was due to a bit of profit-taking with the stock up 56 per cent this year.

Wall Street report

Indices rose as a softer producer price index reading further eased concerns about inflation and a Federal Reserve rate rise next month. Mohit Kumar at Jefferies said the backdrop of high amounts of cash in the system and the Fed not raising rates "should continue to support risky assets". The S&P 500 rose 50.49 points, or 0.7 per cent, to 7,798.99, a new record, as the Nadsaq was up 214.54 points, or 0.8 per cent, at 26,803.03. The Dow Jones industrial average rose 69.72 points, or 0.1 per cent, to 53,839.99.

The day's biggest movers

Company	Change
Lion Finance	5.2%
British American Tobacco	2.8%
Barratt Redrow	2.4%
Computacenter	2.3%
Persimmon	2.2%
Weir	-3.6%
Fresnillo	-3.7%
Metlen Energy & Metals	-4.0%
Endeavour Mining	-4.2%
Antofagasta	-6.8%



Seraphim Space is a leader in investment in space technology businesses

NEWS IN BRIEF

Huw Pill calls for rate rise

Huw Pill, the Bank of England's chief economist, has said that the UK's better-than-expected economic growth strengthened the case for interest rate rises in order to bring inflation under control.

Speaking to The Wall Street Journal yesterday, Pill said that the 0.4 per cent rise in GDP in the second quarter of the year "goes in the direction of reassuring me that we're not entering a sharp downturn.

"We've had 59 months of data in my time as a member of the MPC [monetary policy committee], of which three months have been at or below target," he said. "It matters to me."

Pill was one of three members of the committee who wanted to increase rates by a quarter point to 4 per cent when the panel met last month. They were ultimately outvoted by the six other MPC members, including the governor, Andrew Bailey, who favoured leaving policy on hold at 3.75 per cent.

Inflation fell faster than expected to 2.6 per cent in June, but remains above the central bank's target of 2 per cent.

In June Pill said: "I do fear a little bit that, because we saw inflation go to 11 per cent, policy discussion becomes, 'oh inflation at 3 per cent is not so bad'. Our mandate is very clear: inflation at 2 per cent at all times."

Six of the best for Ackman

Bill Ackman unveiled six new holdings including Netflix, Visa and Mastercard, marking the billionaire investor's biggest portfolio overhaul in years. Ackman, who traditionally invests in no more than a dozen companies, said yesterday he bought the shares starting in the second quarter that will be held in his investment funds including his newest offering Pershing Square USA, which listed in New York in April. The fund manager believes the firms' earnings are poised for strong growth. Ackman's stock picks are closely tracked by professional investors and his 2.8 million followers on X.

Robinhood launches fund

Robinhood's second venture fund debuted yesterday, giving retail investors access to early-stage start-ups that have traditionally been out of reach for all but venture capital firms and wealthy investors. The fintech company's Ventures Fund II raised $225.5 million to invest in early and growth stage private companies. Robinhood listed its first fund in March, which focuses on late-stage start-ups. The second fund will centre on current and former participants in the Y Combinator startup accelerator programme, which has financed more than 5,000 companies, including 100 "unicorns", since 2005.

Tapestry's ill-fitting brand

Tapestry forecast sluggish revenue growth yesterday, overshadowing a better-than-expected quarterly profit, highlighting the persistent weakness at Kate Spade, the US fashion house, and cautious spending in North America. Tapestry has struggled to revive sales at Kate Spade, which named the Scottish designer Jonathan Saunders as its creative director last month as part of a turnaround plan that includes improvements in product design. Sales fell 7 per cent on a constant currency basis at Kate Spade, while those at Coach, Tapestry's flagship brand, rose 14 per cent from a year ago.

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CHELTENHAM, GL52 2EH	01242 514402	EXETER, EX2 8QG	01392 256744	LIVERPOOL, L3 5NF	0151 709 4484	NOTTINGHAM, NG1 1GN	0115 956 1811	SUNDERLAND, SR2 9QF	0191 510 8773		

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The Times unit trust information service

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %

ALLIANZ GLOBAL INVESTORS

Inv Serv: 020 7065 1400 Helpline: 0800 317 573

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Strategic Bond Fund ‡	130.24		+0.07	8.05
UK Equity A ‡	400.88		-0.62	3.94
UK Growth ‡	10423.92		-7.82	2.22

ARTEMIS FUND MGRS

0800 092 2051

Authorised Inv Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Global Income Fund R Acc ‡	385.98		+1.12	...
Global Income Fund R Inc ‡	217.05		+0.62	...
Global Select Fund R ‡	228.56		+0.78	...
High Income Fund R Inc ‡	67.15		+0.24	...
Income Fund R Acc ‡	808.9		+0.82	...
Income Fund R Inc ‡	310.04		+0.32	...
Monthly Dist & R Inc ‡	92.75		+0.06	...
SmartGarp Eurp Equity R ‡	903.05		+2.21	...
SmartGarp Global Equity R ‡	700.68		+6.73	...
SmartGarp UK Equity R ‡	4302.25		+3.3	...
Strategic Assets R Acc ‡	94.7		+0.01	...
Strategic Bd R M Acc ‡	116.55		+0.08	...
Strategic Bd R M Inc ‡	52.69		+0.03	...
Strategic Bd R Q Acc ‡	116.35		+0.08	...
Strategic Bd R Q Inc ‡	52.56		+0.04	...
UK Select R Acc ‡	1355.61		+4.87	...
Uk Smaller Cos R Acc ‡	2371.12		-4.12	...
UK Special Sits R Acc ‡	1113.78		+1.18	...

AXA FRAMLINGTON UNIT MGMT

Dling: 0845 602 1952 Priv Clients:0845 777 5511

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Health ‡	3412		+16.00	...
UK Select Opps Inc ‡	2152		-8.00	1.10
UK Sml Cos Inc ‡	332.8		-1.10	0.37
UK Sust Eqty R Dis ‡	238.4		-0.60	1.10

AXA FUND MANAGERS

Admin & Enq 0117 989 0808

UK/Global Investment Companies

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Global Gwth Acc R ‡	288.1		...	0.52
Japan Acc A ‡	162.3		...	1.51

CIS UNIT MANAGERS

08457 46 46 46

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
European Growth ‡	299.20		...	1.14
Sus Leaders ‡	1036		-0.19	1.47
UK Growth ‡@	881.7		-0.12	1.69
UK Income ‡@	258.7		-0.15	3.83

CLOSE FUND MANAGEMENT

Dealing 020 7426 6232

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Winchester ‡	5731.83		+68.51	0.60

COLUMBIA THREADNEEDLE INVESTMENTS

Enqs:0870 601 6183 Dealing: 0870 6083

Share Class 1-Retail

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Euro Gwth & Inc ‡	1631		+4	0.10
FTSE All Shr Track ‡	598.1		-0.7	2.70
Global Gwth SCI ‡	406.9		+0.7	...
Strategic Bd ‡	228.9		+0.2	3.90

EDENTREE INV MGMT

0800 358 3010

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Sust Eur Eqty A Dis ‡@	498.5		+3.50	1.85
Sust Gbl Eqty A Dis ‡	465		+1.80	0.53
Sust Mgd Income ‡	142		+0.20	4.01
Sust Sterling Bond A Dis ‡	85.29		-0.06	4.97
Sust UK Eqty A Dis ‡@	255.6		-1.10	1.74
Sust UK Eqty Opps A Dis ‡	328.9		-1.80	1.46

FIDELITY INTERNATIONAL

Private Clnts:0800 414161 Broker Dlgs:0800 414181

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Amer Spec ‡	2950		...	...
American ‡	8110		...	...
Euro Opps ‡	750		...	0.48
European ‡	4477		...	0.76
Global Focus ‡	3750		...	...
Global High Income Bond A Dis ‡	22.39		...	6.38
Global Special Sits ‡	9041		...	...
Japan ‡	1007		...	0.33
Moneyblder Bal ‡	48.71		...	0.60
Moneyblder Inc ‡	28.25		...	5.02
Moneyblder UK Ind ‡	202.37		...	2.48
Special Sits ‡	7560		...	1.64

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Opportunities Fund A Dis ‡	106.7		...	1.41

HALIFAX INVESTMENT FUND MGRS

01296 386 386

Authorised Inv Funds

Share Class C

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corporate Bond ‡	37.39		...	4.50
Intl Gwth ‡	217.5		...	0.60
UK FTSE 100 IT ‡	108.6		...	...
UK FTSE All-S IT ‡	120.9		...	...

HSBC GLOBAL ASSET MGMT (UK)

Enq:0845 745 6123 Dlg:0845 745 6126 Mon-Frid:8-6

HSBC Index Tracker Investment Funds (OEIC)

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Amer Ind Acc ‡	1641		+7	0.77
Euro Ind Acc ‡	1876		+8	2.27
Euro Ind Inc ‡	1087		+5	2.31
FTSE 100 Ind Acc ‡	441.2		-0.6	2.50
FTSE 100 Ind Inc ‡	179.1		-0.2	2.64
FTSE 250 Ind Acc ‡	414.1		...	2.84
FTSE 250 Ind Inc ‡	224.5		...	2.83
FTSE All-S Acc ‡	1112		-6	2.65
FTSE FTSE All-S Inc ‡	500.3		-3.0	2.79
Japan Ind Acc ‡	239.8		+2.4	1.41
Japan Ind Inc ‡	174.0		+1.7	1.45
Pacific Ind Acc ‡	1078		+19	1.53
Pacific Ind Inc ‡	610.2		+10.7	1.56

HSBC Investment Funds (OEIC) Retail Share Class

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bd Acc ‡@	312.3		-0.2	4.20
Income Acc ‡	1062		...	3.28
Income Inc ‡@	401.2		-1.5	3.32
Monthly Inc Acc ‡@	313.4		...	3.75
Monthly Inc Inc ‡@	155.9		...	4.02
UK Grth & Inc Ret B Acc ‡@	225.1		-0.9	2.98
UK Grth & Inc Ret B Inv ‡@	87.25		-0.34	3.05

HSBC Specialist Investment Fds (OEIC)

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
American Index Retail Inc ‡	1264		+6	0.76

INVESCO FUND MGRS LTD

Dling:0800 085 8571 Inv Serv:0800 085 8677

Brkr Serv:0800 028 2121

Invesco Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bond ‡	231.98		...	4.07
High Income Dis ‡	433.53		...	3.15
Income & Growth Dis ‡	506.12		...	3.09
Income Inc ‡	1674.39		...	2.85
Money Acc ‡	107.87		...	3.64
Monthly Inc Plus Dis ‡	92.39		...	5.73
UK Opps UK Acc ‡	1398.83		...	1.47
UK Sml Cos Eqty Acc ‡	1377.5		...	1.19

INVESTEC FUND MGRS LTD

Broker Support and Dealing: 020 7597 1900

OEIC Series I, ii,iii & iv

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
American A Acc ‡	877.86		-3.82	...
Cautious Managed A Acc ‡	471.62		+0.1	2.61
Cautious Managed A Inc ‡	270.24		+0.08	2.48
Diversified Growth A Acc ‡	334.15		+0.96	0.20
Diversified Growth Inc ‡	122.97		+0.35	0.94
Diversified Income A Acc ‡	376.75		+0.02	3.78
Diversified Income A Inc ‡	67.84		...	5.20
Emerging Mkts Blended Debt A Ac ‡	144.59		+0.28	5.96
Emerging Mkts Blended Debt A Inc ‡	66.98		+0.13	7.65
Emerging Mkts Equity A Ac ‡	293.51		+3.61	0.04
Emerging Mkts Leaders A Acc ‡	1247.09		+8.42	...
Global Equity A Acc ‡	303.99		-0.21	...
Global Franchise A Acc ‡	404.12		-1.84	...
Global Free Enterprise A Acc ‡	2124.07		+10.8	...
Global Gold A Acc ‡	571.98		+1.78	...
Global Special Situations A Acc ‡	534.12		+0.79	...

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Global Special Situations A Inc ‡	409.76		+0.6	...
UK Special Situations A Acc ‡	2767.42		+10.45	1.02
UK Special Situations A Inc ‡	951.74		+3.59	1.03

For ISIS Asset Mgmt see F&C Fd Mgmt Ltd (OEIC)
JANUS HENDERSON INVESTORS
Investor Serv: 0800 832 831 Dlng:0845 946 4646

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
All Stcks Credit A Inc ‡	113.8		...	4.50
Asian Div Inc U Trust Inc ‡	99.67		...	5.60
Cautious Managed Fd A Acc ‡	358.4		...	3.80
Cautious Managed A Inc ‡	153.8		...	3.90
China Opp Fund A Acc ‡	1318		...	0.10
Emg Mkts Opps Fd A Acc ‡	304.1		...	...
Erpn Sel Opps Fd A Acc ‡	3268		...	0.20
Fix IntMnthly Inc Fd Acc ‡	33.22		...	5.90
Global Equity Fund Acc ‡	6677		...	...
Global Equity Income A Ac ‡	89.11		...	2.30
Global Tech A Acc ‡	7189		...	...
Instl UK idx Opps A Acc ‡	179.2829		...	2.10
M-Asset Abs Rtn A Acc ‡	188.1		...	2.70
M-Man Active Fd A Acc ‡	340.5		+1.5	1.80
M-Man Inc Grth A Inc ‡	163.4		...	2.80
M-Man Inc Fd Grth A Acc ‡	234.1		...	2.70
Sterling Bond U Trst Acc ‡	230.1		...	4.30
Sterling Bond U Trst Inc ‡	55.57		...	4.30
Strategic Bond A Inc ‡	95.66		...	5.70
UK Abs Ret Fd A Acc ‡	206.9		...	2.10
UK Alpha Fund A Acc ‡	202.1		...	1.20
US Growth Fund A Acc ‡	3079		...	...

J.P. MORGAN ASSET MANAGEMENT
OEIC

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Equity Core E Net Acc ‡@	711.2000		-0.6000	2.52

JUPITER UT TRUST MANAGERS LTD
020 7581 3020

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Distribution & Growth ‡	125.2		-0.2500	2.93
Euro Special Sits ‡	608.58		+0.0565	0.71
European ‡	4050.75		+0.0550	0.61
Financial Opps ‡	1377.85		+1.1128	1.01
Global Macro Bd L GBP ACC ‡	427.74		-0.0331	3.87
Merlin Bal Acc ‡	349.15		+0.3037	2.26

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Merlin Growth Acc ‡	838.46		+0.2378	0.20
Merlin Inc Acc ‡@	471.89		+0.1446	3.40
Merlin Wwide Inc ‡	615.76		+0.8010	...
UK Dynamic Equity L Dis ‡	296.8		-0.2617	1.75
UK Growth ‡	284.43		-0.1082	0.64
UK Income Trust ‡	1019.78		-0.1231	4.58

LEGAL & GENERAL (UT MANGRS) LTD

Enquiries: 0870 050 0955 Dealing: 0870 050 0956

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Euro Ind Acc ‡@	820.8		+2.1	1.90
Euro Ind Inc ‡@	490.2		+1.3	1.90
Fixed Int Acc ‡	150.5		-0.1	4.60
Fixed Int Dist ‡	62.2		-0.05	4.60
Global Health ‡	123.8		-1.7	0.90
Glob Tech Acc ‡@	238.9		+0.9	...
High Inc Acc ‡	154.4		+0.1	5.70
Japan Ind Acc ‡	115.1		+1.2	1.30
Pacific Ind Acc ‡	425.2		+7.5	1.40
UK Index Trust Acc ‡	539.9		-0.6	2.50
Uk Index Trust Dist ‡	233.8		-0.2	2.50
US Ind Acc ‡	1428		-4	0.50
Worldwide Acc ‡	473.7		+0.9	0.90

M&G SECURITIES

Enq:0800 390 390 Dealing Line: 0800 328 3196

Authorised Inv Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Charifund Inc ‡@	1903.26		-2.85	5.12

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 2

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Extra Income Inc ‡	826.66		-1.18	5.10
Gilt & Fxd Int Inc ‡	67.12		-0.07	4.38
Gl Hi Yd Bd Inc ‡@	39.84		+0.04	6.24
Index Linked Bd Inc ‡	101.74		-0.13	1.56
Index Trckr Inc ‡	104.88		-0.13	3.00
Short Dated Corp Bd Inc ‡	25.36		...	4.25
UK Select A Inc ‡	3322.38		+3.85	2.63

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 3

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bd A Inc ‡@	32.84		-0.03	5.02
Dividend Inc ‡@	66.5		-0.12	5.37
Recovery A Inc ‡@	142.73		-0.36	2.84
Sml Cos Inc ‡@	365.97		-1.1	2.80

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 4

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Episode Allocation A Inc ‡@	162.06		+0.03	3.78

MARKS & SPENCER UNIT TRUST
0808 005 5555

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
High Income ‡	87.18		...	4.60
High Income Acc ‡	297.5		...	4.60
UK 100 Comp Acc ‡	719.8		...	3.10
UK 100 Comp Inc ‡	323.8		...	3.10
UK Select Port ‡	484.6		...	2.90
UK Select Port Acc ‡	1108.5		...	2.90
W'wide Mgd Acc ‡@	1343		...	0.20
Worldwide Mgd Acc ‡@	747.5		...	0.20

MORGAN STANLEY INVESTMENT MGMT
Enquiries: 0800 0961 962
The Morgan Stanley Funds (UK)
Class A Shares
Equity

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Glob Bal Inc F F Acc ‡	1049.40		...	1.54
Glob Bal Inc F F Inc ‡	938.65		...	1.55
Glob Bal Inc F I Inc ‡	936.69		...	1.49
Glob Bal Inc F I Acc ‡	1046.53		...	1.47
Glob Bal Sust F F Acc ‡	1036.68		...	1.65
Glob Bal Sust F F Inc ‡	989.88		...	1.66
Glob Bal Sust F I Acc ‡	1034.12		...	1.57
Glob Bal Sust F I Inc ‡	989.45		...	1.60
Glob Br Eq Fund F Inc ‡	1105.47		...	4.32
Glob Br Eq Fund I Acc ‡	1741.48		...	4.28
Glob Br Eq Fund I Inc ‡	1168.68		...	4.40
Glob Br Fund I Acc (PH) ‡	14190.86		...	0.32
Glob Br Fund I Inc (PH) ‡	1640.28		...	0.45
Glob Br Fund I Acc (PH) ‡	1748.36		...	0.45
Glob Br Fund I Inc (PH) ‡	3816.88		...	0.32
Glob Quality Fund F Acc (PH) ‡	1549.5		...	0.49
Glob Quality Fund F Inc ‡	1513.12		...	0.51
Glob Quality Fund I Acc ‡	1554.98		...	0.34
Glob Quality Fund I Acc (PH) ‡	1544.1		...	0.34
Glob Quality Fund F Acc ‡	1571.4		...	0.51
Stg Corp Bond F F Acc ‡	144.7		...	4.88
Stg Corp Bond F F Inc ‡	98.12		...	4.90
Stg Corp Bond F I Inc ‡	1381.8		...	4.73
Stg Corp Bond F I Acc ‡	3061.08		...	4.73
US Adv F F Acc ‡	2462.44		...	...
US Adv F F Acc (PH) ‡	1478.42		...	...
US Adv F I Acc ‡	2592.66		...	...
US Adv F I Acc (PH) ‡	1530.73		...	...

SANTANDER UNIT TST MGRS

08457 413002

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Equity Inc Inc ‡	243.5		...	...
Stkmkt 100 Tkr ‡	230.8000		...	...
UK Growth I Acc ‡	655.6		...	...
UK Growth Inc ‡	314.8		...	...

SCOTTISH MUTUAL INV MNGRES LTD

0141 248 6100

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Far Eastern Inc	617.0700	649.4700	...	...
Mutual Far Eastern	1385.0300	1461.7700	+15.38	0.39

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Mutual UK Eq	1429.4900	1508.7000	...	7.81
UK Equity Inc	562.2300	593.3800	...	7.81

SCOTTISH WIDOWS UNIT TRUST MNGRS

0845 300 2244

Overseas Growth Investment Funds

Tracker & Special Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Trkr A Acc ‡	605.0		-0.30	2.50
UK Trkr A Inc ‡	275.3		-0.20	2.50

UK & Income Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bond A Acc ‡@	329.2		...	4.00
Corp Bond A Inc ‡@	108.0		...	4.00
Envir Invtr A Acc ‡	475.8		+3.90	2.10
Hi Inc Bond A Ac ‡@	298.7		+0.10	6.40
Hi Inc Bond A Inc ‡@	70.39		+0.03	6.40
Hi Res A Acc ‡	561.3		-0.40	3.70
Hi Res A Inc ‡	151.9		-0.10	3.80
Strat In A Acc ‡@	228.9		...	4.50
Strat In A Inc ‡@	86.22		...	4.50
UK Eq Trckr A ‡	136.4		-0.10	2.50

OEIC B Class

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Trkr B Acc ‡	670.2		-0.40	2.60
UK Trkr B Inc ‡	273.8		-0.10	2.60

OEIC C Class

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Eq Tkr C ‡	133.2		-0.10	2.60

STANDARD LIFE INVESTMENTS

0845 279 3003

Investment Funds (OEIC)-Retail Shares

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
AAA Inc CAT Acc ‡	98.55		...	2.52
AAA Inc CAT Inc ‡	51.15		...	2.52
AAA Income Acc ‡	108.70		...	...
Amer Eq Gth Acc ‡	296.40		...	...
Glb Advtg CAT Acc ‡	203.5		...	1.32
Glob Advtg Acc ‡	268.30		...	...
Higher Inc Acc ‡	186.00		...	...
Higher Inc Inc ‡	48.14		...	...
Managed Acc ‡	528.1		...	1.83
UK Ethical Acc ‡	258.10		...	...
UK Smlr Cos Acc ‡	827.60		...	...

SVS BROWN SHIPLEY FUNDS

Enquiries:0141 222 1151

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Balanced A Acc ‡	187.41		...	2.02
Blanced A Inc ‡	158.6		...	2.07
Cautious A Acc ‡	133.57		...	2.44
Cautious A Inc ‡	105.64		...	2.48
Dynamic A Acc ‡	501.36		...	1.40
Dynamic A Inc ‡	438.66		...	1.41
Growth A Acc ‡	495.11		...	1.63
Income A Acc ‡	320.35		...	2.17

THREADNEEDLE INVESTMENTS

Client Serv: 0800 0684000

Retail Shares Class 1

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Threadneedle HY Bd Rtl Inc ‡	39.3987		+1.38	4.65
Threadneedle Mnthly Etr Inc Inc ‡	101.7735		+9.2	2.74
Threadneedle SterlingCorp Bd Inc ‡	54.9517		-3.77	4.28
Threadneedle SterlingCorp Acc ‡	54.8491		-3.81	3.96
Threadneedle Stg Bd Ret Inc ‡	39.5799		-3.42	4.17
Threadneedle Strat Bd Ret ‡	41.8679		+0.72	3.82
Threadneedle UK Eq Inc Rtl Inc ‡	119.6509		-10.81	3.51
Threadneedle UK Growth & inc Rtl Inc ‡	112.7824		+1.17	3.21
Threadneedle UK Istl Rtl ‡	250.7228		-47.94	1.33
Threadneedle UK Mnthly Inc Rtl Inc ‡	90.1111		+0.47	3.00
Threadneedle UK Rtl Inc ‡	167.9417		-37.38	1.32
Theadneedle U Smaller Coms Rtl Inc ‡	407.0594		-129.34	0.38

For Resolution see Ignis

TU FUND MANAGERS LTD

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
IFSL Marlborough Eur A Dis1011	1011		...	1.21

* Yield expressed as CAR (Compound Annual Return); † Ex dividend; ‡Middle price; . . . No significant data. # Periodic charge deducted from capital; @ Exit charge

British funds

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/–	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld

Index-Linked

High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/–	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
73.08	63.68	Tr IL 0 ½% 50	64.78	+ .20	0.77	2.48
66.33	57.06	Tr IL 0 ¼% 52	57.92	+ .23	0.43	2.48
101.91	97.20	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 28	99.63	+ .09	0.13	0.31
100.99	97.18	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 29	98.56	+ .11	0.13	0.68
98.88	94.73	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 31	96.03	+ .17	0.13	0.94
88.33	82.97	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 36	83.99	+ .14	0.15	1.84
82.85	76.16	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 39	77.95	+ .30	0.16	2.13
79.32	72.11	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 41	73.34	+ .23	0.17	2.23
74.05	65.19	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 44	67.62	+ .24	0.18	2.39
71.23	62.87	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 46	64.01	+ .14	0.20	2.45
68.00	59.19	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 48	60.36	+ .13	0.21	2.47
60.61	50.05	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 56	51.17	+ .20	0.24	2.41
58.90	48.59	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 58	50.21	+ .23	0.25	2.37
54.25	43.57	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 65	44.96	+ .15	0.28	2.24
53.89	40.40	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 68	43.91	+ .17	0.28	2.18
57.66	42.98	Tr IL 0 ⅛% 73	45.40	+ .28	0.28	1.89
97.88	93.36	Tr IL 0 ¾% 34	94.31	+ .18	0.80	1.55
79.12	70.87	Tr IL 0 ¾% 47	72.07	+ .15	1.04	2.44
62.70	49.79	Tr IL 0 ⅜% 62	52.97	+ .21	0.71	2.32
87.38	80.77	Tr IL 0 ⅝% 40	81.70	+ .30	0.76	2.19
84.28	76.46	Tr IL 0 ⅝% 42	77.45	+ .20	0.81	2.29
104.16	100.95	Tr IL 1 ¼% 27	101.32	+ .10	1.23	0.21
103.67	99.28	Tr IL 1 ¼% 32	100.18	+ .19	1.25	1.22
86.56	72.33	Tr IL 1 ¼% 54	75.53	+ .33	1.65	2.46
85.60	73.36	Tr IL 1 ¼% 55	75.10	+ .27	1.66	2.45
99.52	94.19	Tr IL 1 ⅛% 35	95.08	+ .09	1.18	1.71
97.09	90.76	Tr IL 1 ⅛% 37	91.75	+ .25	1.23	1.94
102.53	95.86	Tr IL 1 ¾% 38	97.07	+ .12	1.80	2.02
99.42	88.49	Tr IL 1 ⅞% 49	90.01	+ .17	2.08	2.44
248.27	236.46	Tr IL 2% 35	242.11	+ .51	0.83	1.68
349.35	338.41	Tr IL 4 ⅛% 30	342.41	+ .50	1.20	0.82

Longs (Over 15 Years)

High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/–	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
26.99	22.31	Tr 0 ½% 61	22.87	– .03	2.19	5.45
65.04	55.40	Tr 0 ⅛% 51	56.81	+ .21	0.22	2.48
38.39	32.78	Tr 0 ⅝% 50	33.97	+ .06	1.84	5.68
47.60	40.99	Tr 1 ½% 53	42.16	+ .06	3.56	5.74
45.88	39.62	Tr 1 ¼% 51	40.84	+ .05	3.06	5.74
33.04	27.53	Tr 1 ⅛% 73	28.09	+ .04	4.00	5.27
48.44	41.88	Tr 1 ¾% 57	42.92	+ .05	4.08	5.69
48.36	41.73	Tr 1 ⅝% 54	43.01	+ .06	3.78	5.72
41.45	35.65	Tr 1 ⅝% 71	36.40	+ .04	4.46	5.40
57.14	49.76	Tr 2 ½% 65	50.97	+ .07	4.90	5.61
74.02	64.55	Tr 3 ½% 68	66.23	+ .07	5.28	5.60
81.50	72.00	Tr 3 ¾% 52	73.86	+ .09	5.08	5.69
80.90	71.30	Tr 3 ¾% 53	73.02	+ .08	5.14	5.72
88.15	77.58	Tr 4 ¼% 55	79.51	+ .09	5.35	5.70
83.52	73.44	Tr 4% 60	75.06	+ .07	5.33	5.67

Mediums (5-15 Years)

High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/–	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
83.19	79.47	Tr 0 ¼% 31	81.61	+ .06	0.31	4.42
86.27	82.79	Tr 0 ⅜% 30	84.85	+ .04	0.44	4.37
72.25	67.14	Tr 0 ⅝% 35	69.18	+ .08	0.90	4.92
79.97	75.46	Tr 0 ⅞% 33	77.37	+ .08	1.13	4.73
48.97	42.75	Tr 0 ⅞% 46	44.19	+ .06	1.98	5.63
54.44	47.82	Tr 1 ½% 47	49.24	+ .04	3.05	5.67
61.88	55.55	Tr 1 ¼% 41	57.44	+ .08	2.18	5.39
66.75	60.85	Tr 1 ⅛% 39	62.83	+ .11	1.79	5.22
75.83	69.99	Tr 1 ¾% 37	71.82	+ .11	2.44	5.12
55.77	49.19	Tr 1 ¾% 49	50.47	+ .05	3.47	5.68
85.07	81.01	Tr 1% 32	82.92	+ .06	1.21	4.57
82.54	74.42	Tr 3 ½% 45	76.21	+ .08	4.59	5.58
95.49	90.74	Tr 3 ¼% 33	92.20	+ .09	3.52	4.66
80.41	72.57	Tr 3 ¼% 44	74.41	+ .09	4.37	5.56
100.00	85.76	Tr 3 ¾% 38	87.78	+ .12	4.27	5.18
102.40	96.34	Tr 4 ½% 34	97.96	+ .09	4.59	4.81
101.93	0.01	Tr 4 ½% 35	97.31	+ .11	4.62	4.89
96.45	87.54	Tr 4 ½% 42	89.64	+ .10	5.02	5.47
102.33	0.01	Tr 4 ¼% 32	98.47	+ .07	4.32	4.55
100.56	94.70	Tr 4 ¼% 34	96.28	+ .09	4.41	4.82
99.39	92.65	Tr 4 ¼% 36	94.50	+ .09	4.50	4.98
100.00	88.42	Tr 4 ¼% 39	90.50	+ .14	4.70	5.26
100.00	86.92	Tr 4 ¼% 40	89.16	+ .14	4.77	5.34
90.97	81.54	Tr 4 ¼% 46	83.62	+ .08	5.08	5.61
89.58	79.95	Tr 4 ¼% 49	81.93	+ .07	5.19	5.65
101.49	97.47	Tr 4 ⅛% 31	98.48	+ .04	4.19	4.50
100.70	95.57	Tr 4 ⅛% 33	96.92	+ .08	4.26	4.67
104.72	100.54	Tr 4 ¾% 30	101.38	+ .06	4.69	4.39
103.33	96.78	Tr 4 ¾% 35	98.52	+ .10	4.82	4.95
102.00	93.84	Tr 4 ¾% 38	95.92	+ .14	4.95	5.20
102.58	98.98	Tr 4 ⅜% 30	99.81	+ .04	4.38	4.43
97.07	89.07	Tr 4 ⅜% 40	91.08	+ .15	4.80	5.31
100.37	100.22	Tr 4 ⅝% 32	100.18	+ .06	4.62	4.59
100.00	94.52	Tr 4 ⅝% 37	96.27	+ .11	4.80	5.09
100.99	96.96	Tr 4 ⅞% 36	98.81	+ .12	4.93	5.03
105.68	96.52	Tr 5 ¼% 41	98.84	+ .16	5.31	5.37
105.44	93.20	Tr 5 ⅜% 56	95.40	+ .10	5.63	5.70

Shorts (Under 5 Years)

High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/–	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
91.87	89.09	Tr 0 ½% 29	91.29	+ .03	0.55	4.26
98.67	91.49	Tr 0 ⅛% 28	94.48	+ .01	0.13	4.05
99.42	96.16	Tr 0 ⅜% 26	99.39	+ .01	0.38	3.65
91.00	0.01	Tr 0 ⅞% 29	89.77	+ .02	0.97	4.35
97.43	95.29	Tr 1 ¼% 27	97.36	+ .01	1.28	4.18
95.46	92.89	Tr 1 ⅝% 28	94.55	– ...	1.72	4.26
101.17	98.03	Tr 4% 29	98.97	+ .03	4.04	4.40
101.39	99.44	Tr 4 ¼% 27	100.03	– .01	4.25	4.22
101.88	98.28	Tr 4 ⅛ % 29	99.26	+ .02	4.16	4.39
100.70	99.60	Tr 4 ⅛% 27	100.03	– .01	4.12	4.01
101.65	99.40	Tr 4 ⅜% 28	100.10	+ nc	4.37	4.31
107.20	103.38	Tr 6% 28	103.86	– .02	5.78	4.23

* maturities having an eight-month indexation lag.

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Business

EQUITY PRICES

Dividend yields Please note dividend yields are supplied by ICE Data Services. The yield is the sum of a company's annual 12-month dividend payments divided by the last day's closing share price.
12-month high and low High/low prices for UK equities and investment trusts are based on intra-day figures.

Automobiles & Part

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
86¾	33¾	Aston Martin Lag	35⅛	−¼	...	-0.7

Banking & Finance

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
265	177½	**Aberdeen Group‡**	243⅜	−7⅜	6.0	11.3
1¼	0⅝	Acuity RM♦	0⅝		...	-3.2
4006	2624	**Admiral**	3894	+66	3.7	15.8
662½	414⅜	AJ Bell	612	−1	2.4	23.8
28761⅛	22372¾	AON Corp‡	25974	−54	0.9	...
1130	765	Arbuthnot♦	790	−40	7.0	7.2
276½	145⅞	Ashmore Group	225⅜	+1⅝	7.5	18.5
2126½	1526	Australia & NZ	1989⅝	+84¾	5.7	19.5
717⅞	590⅝	**Aviva**	713⅝	+9⅝	5.5	26.5
1122	689	Banco Santander	1094	−4	1.5	14.1
554⅛	352⅞	**Barclays‡**	519	−⅜	2.2	11.8
17¼	4	Blue Star Capital♦	4¼		...	-2.2
710	613	BP Marsh & Ptnrs♦	676		5.4	5.1
363⅜	212	Bridgepoint Grp	337⅜	−1¼	2.8	67.5
352	264⅝	Chesnara	333		6.8	-65.9
492	349	City of London Grp	480	−2	6.9	16.2
556⅛	318⅜	Close Bros	420	−4	...	-6.3
753	203	CMC Markets‡	699	+5	2.0	25.4
2957⅝	2057	Deutsche Bank	2830⅞	−21¼	3.0	10.5
93	74	EFG-Hermes Hldgs	74		0.9	...
240¼	136	EPE Special Opps♦	211		...	8.7
85	52	Fiske♦	67½		1.7	5.9
92	80	Foresight Ventures VCT	83		4.3	15.5
4700	2215	Georgia Capital	4435	−35	...	2.8
57	43¼	Hansard Global	52¼	+¼	8.5	40.2
230	194	Helios U/W♦	223½		4.5	7.7
1904	1257⅛	**Hiscox‡**	1785	−15	2.2	13.3
1610	928⅛	**HSBC‡**	1525¾	−12	3.6	17.0
1956	1016	**IG Group‡**	1332	−22	3.2	9.2
204	90⅞	Impax Asset Mgmt♦	116¾	+¾	8.6	7.3
2340	1424⅞	**ICG**	2046	−6	4.3	12.3
145¾	115⅝	Intl Public P'ship‡	140¼	−2¾	6.3	-10.4
690	499⅜	**Investec**	679½	+9	5.7	8.8
76	60	Investment Co	76¼		...	...
75	48	IP Group	70¾	−1	1.8	9.8
24	6½	Jarvis Securities♦	7¾		45.2	2.4
214½	113⅜	Jupiter Fund Mgmt‡	162	+1⅜	3.7	8.4
700	549	Lancashire Hldgs‡	591½	−2	2.8	6.6
318⅛	217¼	**Legal & General**	299¼	−3⅜	7.3	29.9
13380	6905	**Lion Finance Group**	13380	+660	2.4	9.4
385	223	Liontrust Asset Mgmt	315	−3	6.0	20.5
61	35	Livermore Invs Grp♦	36	−1⅜	8.7	16.2
117⅞	77⅜	**Lloyds Banking‡**	115¼	+⅛	3.5	16.5
22	14	LMS Capital	15½	+½	25.9	...
10140	6684	**London Stock Exchange‡**	8556	−196	1.8	35.9
367⅛	247	**M&G**	353⅜	+2	5.8	28.0
327¼	154¼	Man Group‡	313⅜	−1¼	4.1	27.5
39¾	20	Manx Financial Grp♦‡	24		2.1	4.4
10	1¼	Marechale Capital♦	5¾	+¾	...	-18.0
185⅝	98¼	Metro Bank	179¼	+3	...	23.0
2621¼	1864⅝	National Australia	2165⅞	+23⅜	4.1	18.7
726	500¼	**NatWest Group‡**	705⅝	−9	5.0	13.2
833⅞	438⅜	PayPoint	603½	+11	6.6	10.2
1238	910¼	**Prudential**	1017½	+5½	1.9	8.9
1¼	0⅜	Quantum Blockchain♦	0⅜		...	-1.9
209	150¾	Quilter	198⅝	−1	3.2	22.3
2500	1580	Rathbones Group	1702	+8	5.9	15.8
325	245	Rockwood Strategic	320½	+4½	...	0.0
2458½	1620	S & U	1985	+47½	5.8	10.2
3	0¼	Sancus Lending♦	1⅛		...	7.2
59⅛	42¼	Schroder REIT	46	+½	7.8	...
599½	358⅝	**Schroders‡**	584	+1	3.8	17.1
1575½	1038¾	**St James's Place‡**	1193	+10	1.5	11.9
2278	1285	**Standard Chart'd‡**	2223	−2	2.3	15.4
948½	615	**Standard Life**	920½	+6½	6.0	-195.4
6347⅛	4254⅞	Sun Life Canada	5949½	+⅛	3.4	...
6¾	2¾	Tavistock Invs♦	3		3.3	2.5
5200	3615	TBC Bank Grp‡	4842	+4	5.3	6.8
1¾	0¼	Tern♦	1⅜	+⅛	...	-1.6
60	40⅛	Time Finance♦	52½		...	8.3
0⅜	0⅛	Tooru♦	0¼		...	-1.7
4	1½	Truetide♦	3¼		...	-5.8
132	77⅛	Vanquis Banking Gp	78⅝	+¼	...	24.6
2800	2000	Volvere♦	2060	−50	...	10.9
7239⅝	5453⅛	Wells Fargo‡	6520⅜	−62⅞	2.3	...
2275⅜	1631¼	Westpac Bkg Corp	1867¼	+15¾	4.3	17.8
31¾	23	Worsley Investors	28⅜		...	...
57550	49947¼	Zurich Insurance	53786⅞	+37⅝	5.1	18.4

Construction & Property

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
370	181	Alumasc♦	220		5.0	8.5
6⅝	4½	Aseana Properties	4¾		...	1.2
2½	1¼	Built Cybernetics♦	1⅝		...	-160.0
973	544	Balfour Beatty	922½	−4	1.6	17.5
410¼	235⅜	**Barratt Redrow**	328⅝	+7⅝	5.2	24.2
2890	1715	Bellway	2200	+54	3.3	16.6
4442	2796	Berkeley	3646	+98	...	11.0
1208	800½	Big Yellow Grp	903½	+9	5.2	...
460	233	Billington Hldgs♦	415	−2½	2.7	39.9
237	133½	Boot (Henry)	156		5.0	8.9
383¾	271⅜	Breedon	355⅜	+5	4.3	14.7
451⅝	318⅝	**British Land**	437¼	+1⅜	5.3	...
2900	2500	Cardiff Property	2750		1.1	20.7
2196	1469⅜	Derwent London	2088	+12	3.9	...
5½	4⅛	DCI Advisors♦	4¾		...	-2.7
19½	11	First Property♦	12½		2.0	6.9
75	29	Fletcher King♦	42½		5.3	28.7
62	31¾	Foxtons Group‡	37⅛	−⅛	3.1	8.6
635	407½	Galliford Try Hldgs	626	+6	3.2	18.6
391½	241	Genuit Group	283	−⅝	4.6	15.5
435	221	Gleeson (MJ)	278	−1	4.0	10.3
1051¼	788⅝	Grafton Grp Units	1040	+3¼	3.6	14.8
208½	149½	Grainger	177	+2	4.7	6.5
377	270	Great Portland Est	360⅜	+4	2.3	0.0
391¾	263⅜	Hammerson	384⅜	+4⅜	4.7	...
183	116¾	Harworth Group	181	+1	1.0	62.4
400	215½	Heath (Samuel)♦	245	+30	5.3	30.6
236¼	180⅝	Helical	206	+1	1.3	42.7
149⅝	87⅝	Ibstock	90¾	−1¼	2.2	...
161½	112	James Halstead♦	132⅜	+⅝	6.7	13.6
3518	1238	Keller‡	3118	−4	2.6	15.4
8973¼	8460½	Kingspan Group	8849¼		0.5	28.0
726	522½	**Land Securities**	709	+1	5.8	...
216¼	175¼	**LondonMetric Prop**	194	+1⅛	6.4	...
25⅝	4¾	Macau Prop Opp Fd	6⅛		...	-0.3
206	124	Marshalls	170¾	−2¼	4.1	29.9
106	66	Michelmersh Brick♦	78	+2	5.9	19.4
1	0⅜	Mindflair♦	0⅜		...	-1.3
5730	3915	Morgan Sindall	4536	+34	3.6	12.2
10200	8350	Mountview Estates‡	8800	+50	6.0	16.9
85	65¾	NewRiver REIT	82⅜	+⅜	8.1	...
234	160	Palace Capital	183		8.2	40.7
320	261	Panther Securities♦	296		4.1	12.1
1552	947⅜	**Persimmon**	1195½	+26	5.0	13.4
24	15	Plaza Centers	14½		...	-0.1
109⅝	87⅜	Primary Health Props‡	95	−¼	7.7	...
33⅜	28	Real Estate Inv♦	30⅞		4.9	-61.8
849½	578¾	Safestore	625	+6½	4.9	...
1126	791½	Savills	1088	+107	2.2	20.9
5½	0¼	Secure Prop Dev & Inv♦	0½		...	-0.1
997⅜	603	**Segro‡**	967⅝	+10⅝	3.3	...
155¾	124⅛	Shaftesbury Capital	150½	+1⅛	2.9	8.0
12	6¾	SIG	8½		...	-1.6
153	105	SigmaRoc♦	132¼	−2	...	18.2
113	86¾	Sirius Real Estate	97¼	+¼	5.6	7.5
140	106	Smart (J)	112½		2.9	8.6
23¾	16	Steppe Cement♦	22		...	19.7
116⅞	74⅛	Taylor Wimpey	86⅝	+1½	4.8	31.0
140	104	Town Centre	129½	−1	3.9	...
723½	493⅜	Travis Perkins	655½	+6	1.8	-7.9
175	132¼	**Tritax Big Box‡**	160¾	−1½	5.1	...
745	442¼	Unite Group	530	+4	7.1	...
746⅜	220	Vistry Group	276⅝	+13⅜	...	6.6
434⅜	312	Workspace Group	370	+5	7.1	...
930	730	Wynnstay Props♦	915		3.1	12.7

Consumer Goods

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
229	110½	AEP Plantations	180	+3⅜	3.4	10.5
30	17⅝	Airea♦	26½		3.8	10.4
2359	1729½	**AB Foods**	2065	+22	3.1	14.6
715⅜	589	Barr (AG)	599	−3	3.1	14.2
5326	3677	**British Amer Tob‡**	4264	+114	5.7	12.1
1376½	976	**Burberry Group**	1098	−22½	...	...
181¼	85⅜	C&C Group	97⅛	+½	5.1	...
5⅞	2¾	Capital Metals♦	4¼		...	-35.5
460	271	Churchill China♦	385		5.5	9.7
5195	3270	**Coca-Cola HBC**	4658	+54	2.2	21.1
1515¾	821	Colefax♦	1450		0.4	10.3
5810	4775	Cranswick‡	5230	+40	2.2	17.7
2142	1295½	**Diageo**	1752	+20	2.1	30.3
0¼	0	Distil♦	0		...	-0.6
1918	1160	Evans (M.P.)♦	1688	+6	3.6	10.5
151½	114½	Fevara	138½	−4½	1.7	6.0
23540	14070	**Games Workshop**	19080	+90	3.0	30.6
2185⅜	1088	Glanbia	2016⅞	+½	1.9	37.2
307½	191⅛	Greencore	263⅝	+3¼	1.0	20.0
79¼	4⅝	Headlam	10¼	−½	...	-0.1
861	447⅞	Hilton Food	613	+8	5.7	7.0
3632	2592	**Imperial Brands**	2643	+45	6.3	10.5
7646⅜	5567¾	Kerry Group	7161½	+52¾	1.7	20.9
170	106¼	McBride	161¾	−1⅝	1.9	8.3
216	85	Mulberry Group♦	211	+6	...	-16.2
1275	880	Nichols♦‡	1075	+10	3.6	18.3
374	252	Norcros	325		3.5	...
380	309	Origin Ents♦	367	+1	4.0	8.7
1	0¼	PACSCo♦	0⅜		...	-0.0
138	47⅛	Portmeirion♦	50½		...	-1.1
1½	0½	Provexis♦	1⅛		...	-55.0
114	65⅛	PZ Cussons	105¾	−¼	3.5	22.5
138	92	REA	108½	−2½	...	-209.4
210	155	Tandem♦	190		1.6	12.3
330	220	The Character Grp♦	315		2.2	-46.7
10	5	Ukrproduct Grp♦	6½		...	-15.1
5542⅛	3644	**Unilever‡**	4628½	+58	3.6	12.5
84	19½	Victoria♦	58¼		...	-0.2

Engineering

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
59⅛	10	Assoc Brit Eng	20		...	-6.9
2180	1458	Avon Technologies‡	1916	−4	1.0	74.2
1527	902⅜	**Babcock‡**	1181½	−23½	0.6	28.1
2360	1529	**BAE Systems**	2236	−34	1.7	32.5
1500	500	Braime A N/V♦	1200		1.4	6.4
2295	1376	Braime Group♦	2350		0.7	12.5
550	350	Caffyns	400	−48	2.5	-9.8
0½	0⅛	Cap XX Ld♦	0⅛		...	-3.6
340	202¼	Castings‡	308	+8	6.0	17.7
27	12⅜	Checkit♦	21		...	-8.1
650¾	446½	Chemring Group‡	620	−11½	1.3	34.8
55	28⅛	Chesterfield Spec Cyl♦	34½		...	-38.3
1538	881⅛	Cohort♦	1352	−4	1.3	25.9
534⅝	180⅞	Dialight	516	−4	...	...
15	5¾	Feedback♦	6		...	-0.2
1270	463⅛	Gooch & Housego♦	1220		1.1	89.1
28500	9020	Goodwin	19760	−160	1.4	60.4
4902	3194	**Halma‡**	3744	−20	0.7	38.0
3220	1994	Hill & Smith	2930	−5	...	28.5
2¾	1	Image Scan♦	2⅝		...	-12.4
3166	2216	**IMI‡**	3088	−60	1.1	24.8
7000	3480	Judges Sci.♦	4095	−55	2.8	49.5
90	34	LPA♦	82½		...	-31.2
685	409⅞	**Melrose‡**	492⅛	−1¼	1.5	17.0
261	179¾	Morgan Advanced	251½	−1	4.9	33.5
405	200	Mpac♦	330		...	-10.4
1800	1120	MS Intl♦	1590	+5	1.6	23.6
3318	1682	Oxford Instruments‡	2950	+24	0.8	34.9
2413⅜	1779⅛	Phillips Elec	2019⅜	+52½	3.6	-47.3
4⅛	1	PipeHawk♦	2⅛		...	-3.0
5490	2930	Renishaw	5240	−50	1.5	45.5
1586	990	**Rolls-Royce‡**	1525	−21	0.7	22.0
489¼	286⅜	Rotork‡	483¾	−3¼	1.7	35.1
105	60	SDI Group♦	89½	−½	...	19.0
318⅛	161	Senior	292	−½	0.7	-286.3
2028	2010⅛	SKF Group	2008¼		3.0	30.1
2754⅛	2088	**Smiths**	2612	−35	1.8	30.5
215	135	Solid State♦	180	−2½	1.5	25.0
249	170	Somero Enter♦	235	−10	3.2	16.7
8050	5950	**Spirax Group**	7135	−80	2.4	32.2
7½	3½	Tanfield♦	4½	+¼	...	-4.4
320	240	Thorpe FW♦	258		2.8	11.9
142¾	47	Transense Tech♦	47½		...	5.1
507½	350	Vesuvius	397⅜	−4⅜	5.9	18.8
710	325	Volex‡	560	−9	0.9	21.5
3580	2254	**Weir**	2662	−100	1.6	27.8
2060	843	XP Power	1734	−28	...	-41.3

Health

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
284½	187	Advanced Medical♦	281½		1.0	60.9
12⅛	5	Allergy Therapeutics♦	5¼		...	-6.2
8	0⅞	CelLBxHealth♦	1⅜		...	-0.2
580	382½	Anpario♦	510		2.5	12.7
15732	9892	**AstraZeneca‡**	11708	+6	2.0	24.0
3⅝	1⅝	Cambridge Nutri Sci♦	1⅞		...	2.7
259¼	193	**Convatec**	231¾	−1⅜	2.4	36.4
35	20	Potter & Moore♦‡	23½		2.3	7.7
116⅞	72	Eco Animal Health♦	102½		...	31.4
32	21¾	EKF Diagnostics♦	25¼	−¾	...	53.8
10½	0¼	Futura Medical♦	0½		...	-0.2
3228¾	1943	Genus	2254	−2	1.5	76.9
2282	1288⅝	**GSK‡**	1856½	−12½	3.8	13.2
0¼	0⅛	Gunsynd♦	0⅛		...	-2.0
416⅛	274⅜	**Haleon‡**	357⅞	−2	2.0	19.2
1865	1187	Hikma Pharma‡	1643	−4	3.9	12.2
266	150½	Hutchmed China♦	190	+9	...	4.8
19⅜	1⅜	ImmuPharma♦	4⅛	+½	...	-11.1
32	12¼	Inspiration Health♦	18½		...	-15.9
15	6¼	IXICO♦	7½		...	-4.1
1	0⅜	Thalia Therapeutics♦	0⅝		...	-4.0
77⅝	53⅞	NIOX Group♦	66	+2	2.3	39.1
131.50	96.03	Novartis	CHF 123.74	−0.46	3.0	40.6
962	423½	Oxford Biomedica	487½	−5	...	-18.1
0¾	0¼	Physiomics♦	0½		...	-2.6
4⅜	1¼	Proteome Sciences♦	1¾		...	-1.7
6522⅞	3664	**Reckitt Benck‡**	5140	+2	4.2	11.0
28⅞	10⅜	RUA Life Sci♦	26½	−½	...	-113.7
29	9½	Sareum Holdings♦	25½		...	-10.6
1441½	1050	**Smith & Neph**	1105½	+12	2.7	20.7
256½	140¾	Spire Healthcare	231	+1	0.6	56.3
14	5	Talisman Metals♦	6¼		...	1.8
0⅞	0⅛	ValiRx♦	0⅛		...	-0.3

Industrials

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
79⅞	58⅛	Accsys Tech♦	70¾	−¼	...	31.0
4780½	3665⅛	BASF	4273	−101⅝	4.5	27.5
4606¾	2268½	Bayer	4108⅞	+3½	0.2	-13.1
98⅛	73⅛	Coats Group	84¼	+¼	2.9	19.2
3352	2437	**Croda**	3285	+17	3.4	74.0
460	230	Cropper (James)♦	445	+5	...	14.4
195⅜	136	Elementis‡	181⅝	−2⅜	1.8	-31.5
110	6¼	Hardide♦	86	−2½	...	...
3775	2095	International Paper	3045		4.5	-7.6
2434	1731⅞	Johnson Matthey	2190	−22	3.5	-38.3
1083	660	Mondi	880⅜	−16¾	1.4	27.5
169⅞	110	Robinson♦	132½		4.5	9.7
997⅛	597	Swire Pacific	980⅛	+9⅜	3.8	47.9
12	5½	Symphony Enviro♦	8		...	-7.4
124	16¾	Synthomer	99¾	−4¼	...	-1.0
2858¼	2026⅝	Takeda Pharma	2585⅜	−⅝	3.7	-57.5
831	515	Victrex	812	−5	7.3	25.4
430	320	Wynnstay♦	370	−2½	4.9	37.4
479⅞	318½	Zotefoams	438½	+10½	1.8	9.5

Leisure

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
451	231	Accesso Tech♦	299½	−½	...	14.5
260	160	Celtic♦	203	−1	...	5.7
221⅝	164	Domino's Pizza‡	197	−3¼	5.8	13.0
928¾	500⅜	**Entain**	545⅝	−14⅜	3.7	-5.2
66⅜	19¾	Evoke	46	+⅜	...	-0.4
52	29	Gaming Realms♦	31¾	−⅛	...	15.7
310	210	Heavitree♦	300		2.2	5.5
244	130	Heavitree A♦	225		2.9	4.2
175.70	115.64	**InterCont'l Hotels**	$159.25	−0.50	1.2	32.4
301½	223½	Mitch & Butlers	283	+1	...	9.5
297	129⅜	On The Beach	192⅝		2.1	35.0
151¾	86	Rank Group	105¾	+6	3.3	11.1
219⅜	137¼	SSP	214⅜	+2	2.1	-23.1
0⅝	0¼	Bow Street Group♦	0⅜		...	-0.3
839	530½	Wetherspoon JD	824½	+11½	1.5	13.7
3302	2098	**Whitbread**	2505	+26	3.9	20.3

Media

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
76⅛	51⅛	Aeorema Comms♦	64½	+4½	4.1	51.2
29	18	Altitude Group♦	24		...	-96.0
115	70¼	Arcontech Group♦	79½		5.0	11.3
831¼	418⅝	**Autotrader**	525¾	+¼	2.2	15.4
690	435	Bloomsbury Pub‡	647	+14	2.5	19.5
3½		Caledonian Hldgs♦	1¼	−⅝	...	-0.1
60	40	Catalyst Media♦	42½		...	23.1
0⅝	0⅛	Catenai♦	0⅛		...	-3.0
22	9	Ebiquity♦	9⅜		...	-0.9
785½	262¼	Future	330⅜	+10¼	5.1	5.3
154	60⅝	GlobalData	82½	−4⅜	1.8	18.8
110	44	IG Design Group♦	94	−1½	1.1	-0.8
1000	719	**Informa‡**	921⅝	+11	2.4	...
87⅜	65¾	ITV	71⅝	+¼	7.0	12.1
220	98½	ME Group	118⅜	−¼	7.1	7.9
0⅛	0⅛	Mediazest♦	0⅛		...	14.7
27	12	Mission Group♦	18		...	-0.8
220¼	139¾	Mony Group‡	203⅜	+⅝	6.2	13.3
2341⅜	1624⅜	News Corp A	2132¾	+23¾	0.7	...
2606⅞	1891½	News Corp B	2425¾	+19⅞	0.6	...
439½	217	Next 15 Group♦	338	+13½	4.5	-11.3
1337	874¾	**Pearson‡**	1192½		2.1	23.2
4½	3	Primorus Inv♦	3⅜		...	5.0
75⅜	40⅛	Reach‡	42¾	+½	13.8	-1.0
59	40	React♦	41		...	-28.3
3634	1991	**Relx‡**	2491	−50	2.8	22.1
792¼	391⅜	Rightmove	491		2.2	17.5
270	130	SpaceandPeople♦	136	−1½	...	6.3
130	95⅝	STV Group	107½	−1½	...	-10.0
452¾	170½	System1 Group♦	325		1.8	31.2
4784⅞	4784⅞	21st Cent Fox A	4784⅞		0.9	...
3350	3298¾	21st Cent Fox B	3350		1.3	...
369	230	Wilmington	270	−7	4.3	21.0
412⅝	218½	WPP	396¾	−2¼	3.8	7.9
71½	40	Zinc Media♦	57½		...	-5.6

Natural Resources

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
0⅛	0	ADM Energy#	0		...	1.2
17⅞	8⅛	H-Power♦	11	−⅜	...	-4.6
89⅜	36¾	Afentra♦	73⅛	+⅞	...	-70.5
0	0	Arkadian Strat Metals♦	0		...	-1.1
0¼	0⅛	Alien Metals♦	0⅛		...	-14.9
2⅞	1	Aminex	1⅛		...	-12.9
8924	3349⅞	Anglo Amer Plat	6459¾	−335⅛	7.1	24.0
4239	2115	**Anglo Amer**	3915	−143	0.7	-16.0
435	155	Anglo Asian Mng♦‡	415	+2½	0.7	36.2
4475	2073	**Antofagasta**	3756	−273	1.5	37.6
1¼	0⅜	Arc Minerals♦	0⅝		...	-1.3
2⅜	1¼	Ariana Resources♦	1½	+⅛	...	-155.0
0⅞	0¼	Arkle Resources♦	0¾		...	-11.0
2¼	0⅞	Asiamet Resources♦	1⅝		...	-13.3
1094	481½	Atalaya Mine	921½	−36	1.1	17.7
4¾	2½	Beacon Energy♦	2¾	−¼	...	-0.6
13	4	Beowulf Mining♦	10½	+½	...	-3.1

PRICES

Major indices

New York	
Dow Jones	53,840.08 (+69.81)
Nasdaq	26,803.03 (+214.54)
S&P 500	7,798.99 (+50.49)
Tokyo	
Nikkei 225	68308.59 (+784.53)
Hong Kong	
Hang Seng	25396.51 (-43.66)
Amsterdam	
Amsterdam AEX	1119.59 (+7.31)
Sydney	
Australia AO	9381.40 (-23.30)
Frankfurt	
DAX	26299.74 (-31.33)
Singapore	
Singapore Straits	5720.05 (-0.70)
Brussels	
Brussels BEL20	5708.72 (-14.55)
Paris	
Paris CAC	8650.56 (-24.38)
Zurich	
Zurich SMI	14475.13 (+25.66)
Zurich DJ Euro Stoxx 50	6545.47 (+11.48)
London	
FTSE100	10772.67 (-60.48)
FTSE250	24837.71 (+22.83)
FTSE350	5878.86 (-28.75)
FTSE Eurotop 100	5102.02 (-6.73)
FTSE All Share	5815.10 (-28.00)
FTSE Non Financials	6346.99 (-34.24)
TechMark Focus	9564.49 (-1.19)
US$	1.3509 (nc)
Euro	1.1702 (-0.0002)
SDR	0.9887 (nc)
CPI Jun (2015=100)	142.5
RPI Jun (1987=100)	416.5
RPIX Jun (1987=100)	409.7

London Financial Futures

	Period	Open	High	Low	Sett	Vol	Open Int
Long Gilt	26-Sep	86.98	87.61	86.94	87.28	174799	1323901
	26-Dec	87.01	87.2	87.01	87.23	43	2141
	27-Mar				87.15	0	
3-Mth Sonia Index	26-Jun	96.25	96.2525	96.25	96.25	9219	388584
	26-Sep	96.15	96.16	96.14	96.155	52644	431646
	26-Dec	95.935	95.965	95.92	95.95	78048	533047
	27-Mar	95.78	95.835	95.77	95.81	52198	387913
3 Mth Sonia Index	27-Jun	95.71	95.78	95.71	95.75	64391	387467
	27-Sep	95.695	95.77	95.69	95.74	52310	246215
	27-Dec	95.715	95.795	95.715	95.76	48662	293110
3-Mth Euribor	26-Sep	97.395	97.415	97.395	97.41	89912	651147
	26-Dec	97.235	97.27	97.235	97.26	102432	941301
	27-Mar	97.125	97.17	97.12	97.16	76080	473570
	27-Jun	97.075	97.13	97.075	97.12	93002	491360
	27-Sep	97.075	97.135	97.07	97.12	99019	440548
3-Mth Saron Index	26-Jun				100.045	183	70474
	26-Sep	100.04	100.045	100.04	100.04	2163	75072
	26-Dec	99.975	100	99.975	99.99	6387	52955
	27-Mar	99.875	99.915	99.87	99.905	3977	35895
	27-Jun	99.78	99.835	99.78	99.825	3727	24356
	27-Sep	99.72	99.775	99.71	99.76	1887	25871
	27-Dec	99.665	99.725	99.655	99.71	1826	19506
FTSE100	26-Sep	10843	10870.5	10784.5	10788	47872	478664
	26-Dec	10927	10927	10871	10854.5	5	1300
FTSEurofirst 80	26-Sep				8918	0	
	26-Dec				8964.5	0	

Tradeweb

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Commodities

Natural Gas $
2.754 -0.05

Light Crude Oil
82.61 -0.66

Crude Oils ($/barrel FOB)
WTI SEP 26 82.63 -0.64
WTI OCT 26 81.6 -0.57
WTI NOV 26 79.98 -0.52
WTI DEC 26 78.5 -0.29
WTI JAN 27 77 -0.29

Products
Fuel Oil 480.7 1.75
Euro Naphtha CIF NWE 731.577 -11.606

ICE Futures

Gas Oil
Sep1253.75-1253.25 Jan1050.25-1049.75
Oct1199.25-1198.75 Feb1021.25-1020.75
Nov1143.5-1142.75
Dec1087.5-1086.75 Volume: 226211

Brent
Oct88.29-88.27 Jan82.69-82.66
Nov86.34-86.31 Feb81.3-81.27
Dec84.34-84.32 Volume: 622486

Cocoa
Sep4106 +14 Sep4249 +27
Dec4147 +6 Dec4222 +28
Mar4255 +16 Mar4255 +16
May4267 +16 May4267 +16
Jul4275 +19 Volume: 29511

Robusta Coffee
Sep3680 -93 May3602 -82
Nov3656 -97 Jul3586 -81
Jan3644 -90
May3602 -82 Volume: 31034

White Sugar
Oct515.2 +8.4 Aug504.5 +4.7
Dec513.4 +8.3 Oct496 +0.9
May512.1 +6.2
May512.1 +6.2 Volume: 27886

London Grain Futures

LIFFE Wheat (close £/t)
Nov201.25 +0.75 May206.5 -0.75
Jan 202.75 Jul 209.5
Mar 205 Volume: 9857

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
0⅛	0	Bezant Resources♦	0⅛		...	11.3
3495	1918	BHP Group	3266	-88	3.1	24.8
14	7⅝	Border & Sthn Pet♦	10⅝	-¼	...	-89.5
122½	8⅜	Bougainville	9⅜	+¼	...	-14.1
609⅜	399⅜	**BP‡**	522⅞	-8¼	4.8	...
0	0	Buccaneer Energy♦	0		...	-0.7
8¼	1¾	Cadence Minerals♦	4¼	-⅜	...	-8.1
5½	3	Cadogan Energy	3¾		...	-11.3
2900	1250	Caledonia Mining♦	1675	-40	2.5	8.0
3⅜	1¾	Caspian Sunrise#	1⅞		...	3.5
244	125¼	Cent Asia Metals♦	146	-5	8.2	-4.6
2¼	1⅛	Chariot Ltd♦	1½		...	...
0	0	Clontarf Energy♦	0		...	-6.2
0½	0¼	Corcel♦	0⅜		...	-2.1
18½	8	Crism Therapeutics♦	10¾	+¾	...	-2.1
300½	108⅛	DRD Gold	178¾	-1½	2.3	15.0
0½	0⅛	ECR Minerals♦	0¼		...	-3.1
0⅛	0	Empyrean Energy♦	0		...	-0.4
5620	2410	**Endeavour**	4109	-179	3.2	19.8
28	9¾	EnQuest	24⅛	-¼	3.3	...
6	2	Eurasia Mining♦	2⅜		...	15.7
2⅜	0⅝	Europa Oil & Gas♦	1⅞	-⅛	...	-9.5
87¼	27¼	Ferrexpo#	28⅝		...	-4.5
4472	1617	**Fresnillo‡**	2873	-143	3.9	20.7
80	3	Galantas Gold♦	24		...	-6.5
12½	2⅞	GCM Resources♦	3⅜		...	-4.8
7½	2½	Gem Diamonds	4¼	+⅝	...	-0.1
3⅜	1⅝	Getech♦	3¼	+⅛	...	-7.7
707¼	281⅞	**Glencore**	560⅞	-12	2.2	...
0½	0⅛	Geo Exploration♦	0⅛		...	-4.5
4582¾	2310¼	Gold Fields	2940½	-96¼	4.0	...
21	6½	Goldplat♦	18		2.9	30.0
2	0¼	Goldstone Res♦	0⅝		...	-0.8
800	230	Greatland Resources♦	643½	-19	...	19.4
353¾	176	Griffin Mining♦	289	-1½	...	32.3
235	160⅝	Gulf Keystone	176	-1⅜	7.2	34.1
858	246¼	Hochschild	509	-24	0.9	17.6
553	294	Hunting	482	+4	2.0	24.9
0⅛	0	Ironveld♦	0		...	-2.1
219¾	57⅞	ITM Power♦	111¾	-2⅜	...	-15.1
5¼	2¼	Jubilee Metals♦	2¾	-⅛	...	-3.6
1⅛	0⅜	Karel Diamond Res♦	0⅝		...	-3.9
2⅛	0½	KEFI Gold and Copper♦	1⅛		...	-10.7
345	178⅜	Kenmare Res	200½	-1½	...	-0.7
5⅞	1¾	Landore Res♦	1¾		...	-1.8
0⅛	0⅛	Lansdowne Resources♦	0⅛		...	-1.6
4⅞	2⅝	Lexington Gold♦	2⅝		...	-27.5
19¼	10¼	Metals Exploration♦	13⅞	-¼	...	17.9
0⅞	0⅛	Nativo Resources♦	0⅛		...	-0.1
4½	1	Nostrum Oil & Gas	4		...	-0.0
0⅝	0⅛	Oriole Resources♦	0⅜		...	-16.0
		Ormonde Mining			...	...
41	11½	Orosur Mining♦	16⅝	+1⅜	...	...
190⅜	59¾	Pan African Res	107	-6⅜	2.0	20.2
33¼	6¾	Pantheon Res♦	14⅛	-1¾	...	-50.3
27	12½	Parkmead Group♦	20½		...	3.1
22⅝	5¾	Petra Diamonds	6		...	-0.2
1⅛	0½	Petrel Resources♦	0⅞		...	-4.0
1⅝	0⅝	Petro Matad♦	1		...	-4.6
8¾	2¾	Plexus Holdings♦	3⅝		...	-1.4
938	672	Porvair‡	880	-10	0.8	22.4
5⅛	2⅛	Prospex Energy♦	3½	-⅛	...	-5.2
5	0⅞	Quadrise♦	1⅛		...	-6.4
160	35	Reabold Resources♦	62½		...	-781.2
0	0	Red Rock Res♦	0		...	-0.3
10416¼	5324⅛	Rio Tinto Ltd‡	9050⅛	-342⅛	3.8	17.2
9117	4436½	**Rio Tinto‡**	7166	-359	4.8	15.8
0½	0⅛	Rome Resources♦	0⅜		...	-15.4
375	184¼	Serabi Gold♦	300	-5	1.7	5.7
302⅜	146	Serica Energy♦	239¼	-6⅝	6.7	-24.9
3758½	2553¾	**Shell‡**	3288	-34½	4.6	14.7
7	2¼	Shuka Minerals♦	2⅞	+⅛	...	-2.1
13	1½	Sound Energy♦	1¾		...	-1.6
27	5½	Star Energy♦	22	-1½	...	-3.9
4½	0⅞	Sunda Energy♦	2½	+1⅛	...	-2.5
0	0	Sunrise Resources♦	0		...	-3.0
0		Synergia Energy♦	0		...	0.5
0⅛	0	Tertiary Minerals♦	0⅛		...	-6.5
0⅞	0½	Thor Energy♦	0½		...	-0.6
7066	4293½	Total Eng SE	6444½	-8⅞	4.6	12.6
0	0	Tower Resources♦	0		...	-0.4
19½	3½	Tullow Oil	14½	-⅛	...	49.0
0	0	UK Oil & Gas♦	0		...	-0.2
13	2⅝	URU Metals♦	4		...	-2.7
0⅜	0⅛	Vast Resources#	0⅛		...	-0.5
9	1⅜	Westmount Energy♦	3⅛		...	-8.3
1½	0½	Xtract Resources♦	1¼		...	-5.2
4⅜	2¼	Zephyr Energy♦	3⅛		...	-7.2

Professional & Support Services

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
5135	2980	4imprint‡	4784		3.7	16.0
615	464	Andrews Sykes♦	597½		4.3	13.8
130	103½	BTG Consulting♦	107	+½	4.3	20.2
2886	1981	**Bunzl**	2746	-8	2.7	19.5
416	215	Capita	271	+11½	...	-1.9
49⅞	25	CEPS♦	40		...	-11.4
165	90	Christie Group♦	152½		2.3	30.0
2581⅛	2000	**Compass**	2407⅜	-34	2.1	29.5
87	64½	Croma Security♦	70		3.4	12.2
6740	4188	**DCC Energy**	6370	-5	3.4	...
35	15	Diales Grp♦	34	+½	4.4	26.2
7765	4970	**Diploma**	7365	-55	0.9	53.4
840	505	DiscoverIE	813	-6	1.6	26.9
115¼	78⅜	Essentra	107⅜	-1¼	2.0	...
3987	2203	**Experian**	2811	-18	1.8	23.1
330	110	FIH Group♦	145	+5	4.7	-3.5
850	588	Hargreaves Servs♦	810	+14	4.9	8.7
5855	3519⅜	**Intertek**	5840	-5	2.8	26.8
250¾	163½	Int'l Workplace	182½	+5⅜	0.6	...
172⅛	123¾	Johnson Service	147¼		3.3	15.8
554	360	Journeo♦	503	+5	...	20.7
261⅞	178⅝	Kier Group	260¼	+8⅜	3.0	20.3
1170	910	Latham (J)♦‡	1070		3.4	11.6
3700	2100	London Security♦	3650		2.7	18.8
298	204	LSL Property Servs	257	+1	4.4	15.5
99	59¾	Macfarlane	69½	-½	5.3	17.4
189⅞	64½	Maintel Holdings♦	68½	+1	...	-5.8
28	15¼	Malvern Intl♦	21½		...	-2.8
460	310	Mears Group	435	-½	4.2	7.8
269⅜	101¼	Michael Page	195	+½	2.4	67.2
214	134¾	Mitie Group‡	208	+1¾	2.2	31.5
15¾	0¾	MobilityOne#	6¾		...	-2.1
137	71⅛	Newmark Security♦	110		...	15.6
260	170	Norman Broadbent♦	187½		...	5.9
158	84⅞	Northern Bear♦	131½	+4	5.7	4.4
187½	110	NWF Group♦	151		5.8	8.1
66	42	PCI-PAL♦	61½	-1¼	...	...
12½	7	Petards♦	9¾	-¼	...	-14.6
12⅞	7	PHSC♦	7¾		...	-2.6
0¾	0⅛	PowerHouse Energy♦	0¼		...	-3.1
64	41⅜	Record	43⅜	-1½	8.3	11.1
978	772	Renew Holdings♦	923	+7	2.2	15.0
507	329⅝	**Rentokil‡**	351⅜	-8½	2.7	25.5
310	222	Restore♦	301	-2	2.4	-64.0
7	1½	River Global A♦‡	2½		...	-0.3
30	14	Roebuck Food Group♦	26		...	-9.0
752½	536⅞	RS Group	729½	+6	3.1	21.1
150	85	RTC Group♦	90		7.5	6.4
121½	68	RWS Holdings♦	117⅞		5.4	-4.4
612	520	Science Group♦	574	-3	1.7	7.6
325¾	212¾	Serco	273	-4¼	1.7	19.0
79⅜	54	Smiths News	70	-1¼	7.9	6.0
30	13¼	Software Circel♦	16¼		...	-77.6
52½	36⅝	Staffline Group♦	43	-3	...	11.0
295	132¼	SThree	285	+1	5.0	20.8
350	146	Synectics♦	200		2.5	9.1
2	0½	Thruvision Group♦	1¼		...	-1.2
74	46	Tribal♦	63⅝		2.0	15.1
84¼	58	Vianet♦	66½		3.6	46.5
490	294½	ZIGUP	478	+11½	5.6	14.2

Retailing

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
117⅜	82½	AO World	96¾	-⅞	...	15.2
269¼	140	B&M European	235⅝	-1⅝	4.1	14.5
115¾	58¼	Card Factory	75⅜	+½	6.6	8.4
1648	1062	CVS Group	1299	+5	0.7	17.6
204	113	DFS Furniture	159	+4	0.6	15.1
1248	707	Dunelm	878½		8.0	11.4
840	598	Frasers Group	817½	+13	...	9.4
2046	1407¼	Greggs	1846	-1	3.7	15.4
250	123¾	Halfords‡	233½	-7	3.9	15.4
981	713	**Howden Joinery**	822½	+4	2.7	16.7
895	640½	Inchcape‡	819	-1½	4.1	11.3
1⅜	0⅜	Imaging Biometrics	0¾		...	-4.1
106⅛	64	**JD Sports**	93⅜	+1¾	1.3	10.8
372¼	240¼	**Kingfisher**	327⅝	+5⅜	3.8	23.4
418⅜	301⅛	**Marks & Spencer**	390¾	+5	1.1	30.8
3⅞	0⅝	Mothercare♦	0⅞		...	0.8
93¼	61¾	Naked Wines♦	72⅜	+2⅜	...	-7.9
15900	11200	**Next**	15325	-5	1.7	20.2
376	140¼	Ocado	257⅜	+2⅜	...	5.4
241⅝	167¼	Pets at Home	213¼	+3⅝	3.5	15.4
575	200	Pinewood Tech Group	434	+4	...	90.4
747	183⅜	Saga	681	+7	...	...
380¼	292¼	**Sainsbury's**	344⅞	+7	4.0	19.9
1120	378⅝	WH Smith	434¾	+7¾	...	-3.9
14	4½	Sosandar♦	12¾		...	91.1
510⅜	411⅛	**Tesco**	460¾	+8¼	3.1	16.8
50	30¼	Topps Tiles	35½	-1	8.7	11.6

Technology

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
252	140⅜	Alfa Financial	162⅝	+2⅝	5.9	16.0
307	195	Aptitude Software	212	+5	2.5	29.0
129	55	Bango♦	62½		...	-8.6
20	12	BATM Adv Coms	12½		...	-4.0
33	19⅞	Berkeley Res	25		...	-65.5
3¼	1¼	Blackbird♦	1½		...	-2.4
194	74	Celebrus Tech♦‡	102½		3.3	-114.4
28	12½	Cirata♦	13¾	-¼	...	-3.1
0⅜	0⅛	CloudCoCo♦	0⅛		...	0.4
4962	2234	**Computacenter**	4938	+110	1.5	33.7
286	173½	Concurrent Tech♦	250	+5	0.5	42.7
13½	6½	Corero♦	6⅝	-1⅜	...	-89.2
2644	988	Craneware♦	1300	-40	2.6	31.2
110	50	Crimson Tide♦	87½		...	20.8
9⅞	5¾	CyanConnode Hldgs♦	9⅞		...	-8.4
15½	8	Dillistone Group♦	12		...	-8.2
0½	0	Forgent♦	0		...	-0.0
165¾	94½	FDM Group	112	+¼	6.2	21.5
480	114	Filtronic♦	269	+2	...	...
265	180⅝	GB Group	232	+5	1.9	-7.6
51	24	Ilika♦	24¼	-¼	...	-6.0
138	56	Ingenta♦	67½	+½	6.7	5.6
178	73	Intercede♦	115	+1½	...	20.2
28½	11⅛	Iomart♦	14⅛		...	-1.7
72⅞	4⅝	IQE♦	50¼	+1½	...	-13.3
4453½	912⅝	LG Electronics	1458⅜		1.7	...
79	37	MTI Wireless♦	64		3.2	14.8
14¼	2	Nanoco Group	2½	-¼	...	-2.2
138	94⅛	Netcall♦	118		0.8	48.2
36	22	Northamber♦	24½		2.4	-1.7
60⅜	37½	Oxford Metrics♦	40⅞	+⅝	7.9	-74.4
31	17	Pennant Intl♦	28½		...	-5.7
447	210	Playtech	370	-3⅜	...	0.9
50	31	Pulsar Group♦	31	-1½	...	-4.0
576½	398½	QinetiQ‡	560	-3	2.0	27.9
117	88	RM	105	+4	...	40.4
6½	2⅜	Seeing Machines♦	4⅞	-⅛	...	-11.8
67	35½	Shearwater Group♦	59½	+2	...	-1.5
2024	1083	Softcat	2008	+29	1.5	30.2
50	5	Sorted Group#	9		...	-0.2
1018½	575½	Tele Ericsson	765½	+1¾	3.0	11.6
1181	771⅝	**The Sage Grp**	1015	-5	2.2	26.9
90	52½	Touchstar♦	82½		3.9	-6.2
435	280	Tracsis♦	327½		0.8	...
430	230	Triad Group‡	420	+10	2.1	42.3
330	210	Water Intel♦	318	+2	...	15.0
150	96⅜	Xaar	117		...	-27.2
17	8½	Zoo Digital♦	14¼	+1½	...	-5.1

Telecoms

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
436¼	211⅝	**Airtel Africa**	326¼	+1¾	1.6	23.7
242⅛	173	**BT Group‡**	197	+2	4.2	17.9
169½	106	Currys	160⅛		1.9	10.3
1186	687	Gamma Comms	969	+1	2.3	13.9
247⅝	120	Helios Towers‡	207¼	+¼	0.9	75.6
0⅜	0⅛	Gana Media♦	0⅛		...	-3.1
1916	638	Telecom Plus‡	848	+15	5.9	8.4
131⅛	83⅜	**Vodafone**	120⅛	+¾	3.3	-85.2

Transport

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
260	203⅛	Braemar‡	225	+1½	3.1	31.1
5485	3365	Clarkson	5010	+114	2.3	23.4
683¾	332⅝	EasyJet	673		2.0	10.2
233	152⅛	FirstGroup	183¾	+1¼	3.9	8.6
554	320	Fisher (James)	460	-6	...	-52.9
492⅞	332¾	**Intl Cons Air**	442½	+½	1.5	7.3
695	458	Irish Cont	695	+22½	2.0	17.5
36	17	Mobico Group	26	+⅛	...	-1.2
7	1⅝	Sutton Harbour♦	4¼		...	-0.4
1453	832	Wizz Air	1080	+10	...	...

Utilities

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
220¼	151½	**Centrica**	154⅞	-⅛	3.7	-103.3
937½	613⅞	Drax Group	725	-8½	4.2	35.0
485	420	Jersey Electricity	435		5.0	12.1
1428½	1000	**National Grid**	1200½	+4	4.0	18.3
606	439⅜	Pennon‡	467¾	-¼	6.3	24.1
3335	2381	**Severn Trent**	3104	-2	4.1	25.1
2767½	1597	**SSE‡**	2431		2.8	23.0
1497	1072	**United Utilities**	1423	-7	3.8	16.5

INVESTMENT COMPANIES

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
4497	1825	**3i Group**	2780	-33	3.0	5.2
394½	325	3i Infrastructure	384	+1	3.5	12.0
1758	1408⅛	Aberforth Smlr‡	1738	+8	2.8	27.1
1394	1178	**Alliance Witan**	1390	+3	2.1	75.1
404	321	Artemis UK Future Lead‡	399	+1½	3.9	32.3
220	116⅜	Athelney Trust	165		6.1	14.5
273	235⅛	AVI Global	264	+1	1.7	52.1
194	154½	AVI Japan	171	+3	1.3	58.2
331	264	Baillie Gifford Ch Gr	307½	-2½	0.8	...
133	91⅜	Baillie Gifford Eur Gr	124½	-4½	0.6	...
1086	811⅛	Baillie Gifford Jpn	1072	-2	0.9	...
175¾	123	Baillie Gifford SN	172¾	+⅝	0.4	...
231	180⅛	Baillie Gifford UK Gr‡	221	-6	2.8	35.5
154¾	121¾	Bankers Invstmt Tst‡	154⅜	+1⅝	1.8	68.6
445	387¾	BH Macro GBP	425½		...	20.1
1762	818⅜	Biotech Growth	1728	+4	...	-909.5
289½	197	BlckRck Amer Inc‡	285½	-½	5.2	...
205	120½	BlckRck Eng&Res Inc	183½	+1	3.2	52.4
208	162½	BlckRck Fro Inv	192		4.0	25.6
625	507	BlackRock Grt Euro	618	+2	1.2	89.7
238	200	BlckRck Inc&Grth‡	234		3.3	32.4
288⅜	230¾	BlckRck Smlr‡	280½	-½	2.8	32.0
1072⅞	543⅛	BlckRck Wld Min	964	-24	2.5	40.0
1665	1275	Brown Adv US Sm	1637½	+17½	...	-273.4
1584	1336	Brunner‡	1570	+6	1.7	56.4
402	312	Caledonia Inv	397	+2	1.9	51.6
599	486	City of Lon IT‡	590	-1	3.8	27.4
155⅜	86	Crystal Amber Fd	88½		-64.1	...
592	439⅞	CT Priv Eq Ord	500	+2	5.6	...
373	320	CT UK Cap & Inc	360½	-½	3.7	29.7
120	92	CT UK HIT B	111		5.4	22.9
126	97	CT UK HIT	118	-3	5.1	24.3
480¼	460	Dunedin Ent#	475		...	...
861	737⅝	Edinburgh IT	848	-3	3.8	31.9
294½	186¾	Edin Wwide	262½	+3	...	-236.5
1332	325¾	**F&C Inv Trust**	344¾	+⅝	1.2	76.8
672	546	Fidlty Asian Val	610		3.4	27.1
339	241	Fidelity China Sp	262½	-1	3.4	28.5
1574	832	FdityEmrgMkt	1474	+14	1.3	64.2
445	367½	Fidelity European Trust	444	+1	2.2	39.3
477½	372	Fidlty Spec Val	473½	-½	2.2	38.6
915	706¼	Fins Gwth & Inc	810	+1	2.5	42.9
85⅝	69¾	GCP Infrastructure‡	82		8.5	38.1
370	316	Global Opps Tst	337	-1½	3.1	43.2
105¼	102	Golden Prospect‡	102½		-15.3	...
68⅞	57⅛	Greencoat Renew	67	-⅛	-16.7	...
118¾	92¼	Greencoat UK Wind‡	110½	-3⅜	9.7	-12.7
344	250	Hansa Investment Co‡	336	-2	1.3	76.4
332	244	Hansa Inv Co A‡	328	-2	1.3	74.5
3485	2710	Hbrvest Glbl Pt Eq	3475	+40	...	-58.7
214	173¼	Hend High Inc	208	+1	5.3	18.4
998	769	Hend Smlr	988	+1	2.9	37.8
3290¾	2285	Herald Inv Trust	3060	+15	...	...
520	318⅝	HgCapital Trust	408	+5	1.2	...
141	107¼	HICL Infra	137¾		6.2	10.0
1611⅜	1288¼	ICG Ent Tr‡	1462	-6	2.9	-411.8
494¾	379	Impax Env Mkts	444½	+1½	1.1	90.0
519	368⅜	Invesco Asia Dragon Tr	492½	+½	3.9	50.1
178½	150⅛	Invesco Bond Inc‡	171	+½	7.2	13.1
427	318	Invesco Glbl Eq Inc‡	415	-1	3.9	82.8
1258	1041	JPM American	1254	+8	0.9	...
652	395	JPM Asia Gro & Inc‡	586	+4	5.3	...
313	254½	JPM China‡	274	-2	4.9	70.4
986	788	JPM Claverhs‡	970	+2	3.8	28.8
310	181⅝	JPM Emrg EMEA Sec	249	+3	0.2	...
181¼	118⅜	JPM Em Mkts‡	166¼	+1⅝	4.5	72.3
666	548	JPMorgan Euro	630		2.5	34.7
221	145	JPM Em Mkts Div Inc	207	+3	2.9	36.4
641	529⅝	JPM GG&I	634	+½	3.9	76.7
1098	799	JPM India‡	878	-3	5.0	...
861	661	JPM Japan	858	+6	1.0	84.5
463	365	JPM Smllr Co	456	+2½	0.7	...
1290	977⅜	Law Debenture	1262	-4	2.9	33.9
190	145½	Lowland Inv	188	+½	3.6	27.9
138½	138½	Marwyn Val Inv‡	138½		15.3	...
289	234¼	Mercantile IT	287½	+2	2.9	31.1
687	536	Merchants Trust‡	677	-1	4.4	22.1
804	682	Mid Wynd	790		1.1	...
1664	1366	Monks Inv Trust‡	1640	+4	0.1	...
189	142	Montanaro Eur Sml‡	177½		0.9	91.5
1036	854⅝	Murray Income Trust‡	1004		4.1	26.0
372½	290	Murray Intl‡	370	+½	3.5	26.6
437	345	Pacific Assets Trust	426	+1	...	76.1
409	319½	Pantheon Intl	404	+2½	...	...
5095	3636	**Pershing Sqr‡**	3868	-26	1.4	3.7
557⅛	508	Personal Assets	551		1.0	91.4
743½	384	**Polar CapTech**	685	+8	...	-815.5
81¼	63¼	Renewables Infra‡	75¼	-2⅜	10.0	-13.9
2645	1932	RIT Cap Ptnr	2625		1.7	...
990⅝	490	Riverstone	582	-13	...	-362.3
738	488¾	Schroder TotRt	710	+7	1.6	72.4
892	601⅝	Schrd Asia Pac	842	+4	1.5	63.7
378¾	311⅞	Schrod Inc Gwth	373		3.9	29.7
401	275	Schrod Jap Gwth	397	+4	3.1	57.5
782	652	Schrod UKMid	773	+7	2.9	30.9
17¾	12¾	Schroder UK PP Tr	17¼		...	-71.9
572	480⅛	Scot American‡	561	-4	2.9	35.8
1563	1015¾	**Scot Mortgage**	1449½	+24	0.3	...
88	75½	Sequoia Eco‡	85¼	-¾	8.1	12.5
253	215⅞	STS Glbl Inc Grwth	229		3.7	35.3
352	196⅝	Temp Emg Mkt	321	+2½	1.6	59.6
429½	334	Temple Bar	424½	+1½	3.7	30.8
198⅝	162¾	The Glbl Smaller‡	196¼	+⅜	1.6	66.5
9	0⅜	Potentially AI	6⅜	+⅛	-1.6	...
364½	291	TR Property	312	+1	5.2	19.7
202	194	UIL	202		19.9	...
302	243	Utilico Emerging Mkt‡	280	-3	3.4	20.6
865	682	Vietnam Ent Inv	726	-4	...	4.7
398	309	Ww Health	391½	+1	0.6	...

♦AIM company; # Price at suspension; † Ex dividend; ‡ Ex scrip; ▲ Ex rights issue; ▼ Ex all; § Ex capital distribution; * figures or report awaited; . . . No significant data. Companies in bold are constituents of the FTSE 100 Index. Investment Cos sector Nav Dis or Prm supplied by ICE Data Services.

Exchange rates

Australia $	1.91198 (+0.0021)
Canada $	1.88048 (+0.00015)
Denmark Kr	8.7475 (-0.00307)
Euro	1.17 (-0.0008)
Hong Kong $	10.588 (nc)
Hungary	424.49 (-2.05)
Indonesia	24113.46 (+19.68)
Israel	4.0017 (-0.0214)
Japan Yen	215.05 (-0.001)
New Zealand $	2.30748 (+0.00491)
Norway Kr	12.8248 (+0.0098)
Poland	5.0404 (+0.0094)
Russia	112.108 (+0.48)
S Africa	21.85858 (+0.11344)
Sweden Kr	12.90995 (-0.01356)
Switzerland Fr	1.09705 (nc)
Turkey Lira	64.4696 (+0.0161)
USA $	1.3495 (+0.0004)

Gold/precious metals

(US dollars per ounce)

Bullion: Open $4408.65

Close $4365.67 **High** $4449.73

Low $4357.64

AM $4380.45 **PM** $4373.00

Platinum $1722.759

Silver $64.678

Palladium $1320.672

Money rates %

Base Rates Clearing Banks: 3.75%
ECB Refi 2.40%
Fed Fund 3.5-3.75%
Halifax Mortgage Rate (SVR) 7.24%

Sterling spot and forward rates

Mkt Rates for	Range	Close	1 month	3 month
Copenhagen	8.7480	8.7509	-145.21	-412.092
Euro	1.1700	1.1704	-15.06	-41.97
Montreal	1.8806	1.8803	-25.7	-77.32
New York	1.3495	1.3491	-0.68	-0.99
Oslo	12.8268	12.8147	38.89	141.82
Tokyo	215.0490	215.0510	-53.25	-155.17
Zurich	1.0970	1.0966	-37.27	-111.3

Other sterling

Argentine peso	2013.55432-2013.55627
Australian dollar	1.91200-1.91224
Bahrain dinar	0.50790-0.50990
Brazilian real	7.00060-7.00260
Euro	1.16990-1.17070
Hong Kong dollar	10.58800-10.59200
Indian rupee	128.72720-128.80721
Indonesian rupiah	24113.46094-24153.46094
Kuwaiti dinar	0.41570-0.41770
Malaysian ringgit	5.51480-5.51680
New Zealand dollar	2.30780-2.30840
Singaporean dollar	1.72764-1.72848
South African rand	21.85714-21.86997
UAE dirham	4.95590-4.95790

Dollar rates

Australia	1.41650-1.41730
Canada	1.39369-1.39378
Denmark	6.48208-6.48291
Euro	0.86700-0.86740
Hong Kong	7.84660-7.84760
Japan	159.35201-159.35500
Malaysia	4.08500-4.08900
Norway	9.50300-9.50618
Singapore	1.28038-1.28045
Sweden	9.56501-9.56936
Switzerland	0.81284-0.81289

Data provided by ICE. Data as shown is for information purposes only. No offer is made by ICE or this publication

‘Help 16-year-olds be apprentices’

School-leavers who want to ‘earn while they learn’ have limited opportunities, writes **Jane Hamilton**

Andy Burnham has called for the country to “value the hard hat as much as the graduation cap”, but for school-leavers who want to start work at 16, opportunities remain limited.

Despite nine in ten young people saying they would consider apprenticeships over a conventional degree, the new foundation apprenticeship, designed specifically for young people with no work experience, recorded just 160 starts in its first nine months, against an ambition of 30,000 by 2029.

Young people have to stay in education or training until age 18, so the creation of more apprenticeships at foundation level — equivalent to GCSEs — and Level 3, which equates to two A-levels, would provide a proven path into the workplace.

“Employers have adapted considerably at the graduate and professional end and there are well-established, structured early-career routes out of university, but there hasn’t been comparative adaptation for 16 to 18-year-old school-leavers,” Melissa Carr at Henley Business School said. “Places have not kept pace with the demand from young people.”

As GCSE results day approaches on August 20, this demand is growing. Student job sites report one in five young people are actively applying for direct-to-work routes after school, rather than taking Btecs, A-levels or the traditional university route. This shift may not yet represent the full parity of esteem that Burnham hopes for, but does indicate considerable movement both in pupil and parental attitudes.

As the chief executive of Generation UK, an employment non-profit organisation, Michael Houlihan is witnessing the change. “More young people are choosing to enter work earlier because they’re taking a more pragmatic view of their options,” he said. “University remains a strong route for some, but rising costs and uncertain returns mean it’s no longer the default for everyone. For many, starting work or an apprenticeship at 16 or 18 offers a very attractive and practical alternative — earning while learning and building experience from day one.”

And it’s not just the “hard hat” careers on offer from age 16. Some of the most proactive employers include professional services, law, finance and accounting, offering structured apprenticeships and professional qualifications which fast-track students. Many go on to the same qualifications as their university-educated peers, but with a minimum of five years’ workplace experience under their belts by the time their former classmates graduate.

‘I avoided debt and gained a career’

Case study

At 16, Narpreet Bhamra chose a finance apprenticeship with Microsoft over university, enabling her to earn a salary, gain experience and achieve Association of Accounting Technicians qualifications while building her career.

Within six years, Bhamra progressed from finance apprentice to financial controller, and now works as a global finance business partner for Unilever, the consumer goods group.

Bhamra, from Berkshire, said: “At 25 I have tripled my earnings since starting work and I’m saving up to buy my own home. Avoiding student debt while gaining real-world experience has also given me a significant head-start in my career. I see many graduates applying for, or working in, the same roles I had already secured through the apprenticeship pathway.”

Top tips for hiring a school-leaver and helping them thrive

Ollie Sidwell, co-founder of Higherin, a student jobs site, says GCSE leavers prioritise employers offering career progression and long-term stability. Here’s how to attract them to your organisation.

Invest in your future talent pipeline: Employers that take on GCSE leavers with a view to building their future workforce generate exceptional loyalty and performance.

Design structured onboarding and mentorship: Match up your new hires with an experienced colleague able to guide them through their role and workplace norms.

Guide and offer regular feedback: Your young employees are adaptable and eager to learn, but they need guidance on professional standards and performance expectations.

Show them where they could be in two, five, or ten years: Map out realistic career development routes.

Challenge preconceptions: Create opportunities for them to showcase their skills and fresh perspectives.

The Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) has pioneered the use of apprenticeships, offering Level 2 Foundation and Level 3 apprenticeships, alongside a Level 4 professional diploma in professional accounting, equivalent to the first year of university.

Trainees start straight from school at 16 and follow the structured pathway, while earning a salary at their employer. Sarah Beale, the AAT’s chief executive, is urging parents and employers to “rethink what we tell young people about success”. She said: “The idea that there’s only one route to a well-paid, fulfilling career simply isn’t true, it hasn’t been for a long time. Apprenticeships connect education directly to careers, giving young people the start they need whilst earning a wage.”

Six from the best

Mission 44, Sir Lewis Hamilton’s foundation, encourages under-represented young people to pursue Stem and motorsport careers. As it celebrates its fifth anniversary — and as young people receive their GCSE results — the chief executive, Jason Arthur shares how to include young voices in your organisation.

1. **Choose hope as a discipline, not a mood:** Lewis talks about kids who “dream the impossible”. A leader’s job isn’t to ignore how bleak things can look, it’s to stay hopeful.

2. **Give young people real power, not just a voice:** One of our best moves was to have youth advisers who shape our strategy, comms and grants.

3. **A good story moves people more than a good stat:** I used to lead with data because it felt rigorous. A young person’s story, told well, is what actually gets you through the door.

4. **Get comfortable with saying “I don’t know”:** I became Mission 44’s CEO at 34. To be an effective leader, I’ve had to continually adapt, delegate and always keep evolving.

5. **Slow down:** Everything does not have to happen immediately. Moving fast alone is often slower than moving deliberately together.

6. **Show, don’t just state, the case for diversity and inclusion:** Our team, partners and youth advisers span a wide range of backgrounds, and that range makes our work sharper.

Appointment of the week

National data guardian for health and care

The minister for health innovation and safety is seeking a national data guardian for health and care. This is an independent champion for patients and the public on matters relating to the use, protection and sharing of health and adult social care information.

The appointee will provide trusted guidance and challenge to government, the NHS, social care organisations and the wider health and care system, ensuring that confidential information is safeguarded while enabling its responsible use to improve services, patient outcomes and research.

Candidates will bring a strong track record of operating at a senior level within the private, public or voluntary sectors, and will have extensive experience of the secure and ethical use of sensitive health data, together with a deep understanding of the evolving technologies that underpin modern health and care services.

Remuneration is £63,000 a year for 3.5 days a week. The health secretary determines the length of appointment, up to a maximum of three years. *Apply by September 1 at appointments.thetimes.com*

Working week

Entry-level older workers

Young people in the jobs market are being squeezed out of junior roles by older, overqualified applicants, the Chartered Management Institute shows. A third of UK managers report an increase in the number of more experienced workers applying for entry-level positions, with the biggest surge coming from 41 to 50-year-olds. Nearly a quarter of managers say their preference is for experienced candidates.

Lloyds lifts T-level places

They may be less well known than A-levels, but technical level qualifications, or T-levels, may help pupils become better prepared for the workplace. The qualifications for 16 to 18-year-olds combine classroom study with mandatory industry placements. Lloyds Banking Group has expanded from six placements in 2022 to more than 100 annually, with about half of the students progressing to permanent roles with the group.

Gen Z keep careers local

After decades of young workers flocking to cities to start careers, new research suggests that 47 per cent of Gen Zs are looking to stay in their local communities after education. Proximity to family and an affordable cost of living are the key reasons, the poll from Coca-Cola found. Dusan Stojankic, vice-president at Coca-Cola GB, said: “This research shows a clear shift in how younger people are thinking about work and ambition.”

Fake meetings help staff

Overstretched employees are scheduling fake meetings to make time to get their actual work done, raising questions about employees’ time. Two thirds of staff say they end the working day with tasks still left on their list, while 70 per cent say they’d rather tick something off their to-do list. “Leaders should protect focus time as deliberately as they protect meetings,” Molly Sands from Atlassian, a software firm, said.

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Wed 19 **Harstad, Norway**
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Fri 21 **Kristiansund, Norway**

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Sun 23 ***Cruise Innvikfjorden & Nordfjord***

Sun 24 **Stavanger, Norway**

Tue 25 **Bruges (from Zeebrugge), Belgium**

Wed 26 **Arrive in Southampton**

Dates not mentioned will be spent relaxing at sea

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Intrepid Times foreign correspondent
Trevor Fishlock
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Register

Obituaries

Zhu Rongji

Caustic but reforming leader known as 'Madman Zhu' who oversaw his country's historic admission into the World Trade Organisation

ALAMY

Zhu on a trading floor in Chicago and, left, with President Clinton in 1999

When Zhu Rongji rose to become mayor of Shanghai in the late 1980s, he took over a city that had once been famed as the Pearl of the Orient but now battled to lure tourists to its faded glories. China, still opening its doors to the world after the chaos of Mao Zedong's radical Cultural Revolution, was mired in poverty and communist red tape.

But the blunt-speaking Zhu was not one to be deterred by the challenge of filling tourist quotas. He called the city's bureaucrats to a surprise meeting. "How is Shanghai expected to attract 900,000 foreign tourists if they can't find a clean toilet?" he asked. He told them to scrub every public lavatory in town.

Such bluntness earned him enemies and saw him purged twice from the Communist Party hierarchy. But it also won him the patronage of a similarly frank party leader, the supreme pragmatist Deng Xiaoping, who recognised Zhu's talents and promoted him to one of the highest offices in China.

As premier he was the driving force in transforming China from a lacklustre economy dragged down by Soviet-style central planning into a towering global giant.

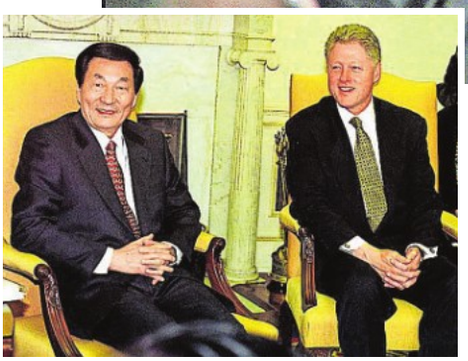
He knew when he took on the job that he would have to take decisions that would wreak havoc with the lives of tens of millions of ordinary Chinese. He would also face the entrenched vested interests of Communist Party bosses.

Speaking in early 1998 as he assumed the premiership, he spoke with a candour rare in most Chinese leaders: "Our country faces many potential crises that could erupt at any time. Ordinary people are discontented about us in many ways. Especially, there is corruption among officials, the gulf between rich and poor, and the way some local officials act like tyrants."

His willingness to take risks coupled with a steely determination to improve people's lives despite resistance from party conservatives aghast at policies they believed betrayed communist principles laid the foundation for China's jaw-dropping boom.

Creaking, debt-ridden and inefficient state-owned enterprises, the backbone of the economy, were at once in his sights. His slogan was "grasp the big, let go the small". Large, strategic monopolies such as petroleum, aviation and heavy industry were brought under tighter central control to turn them into modern competitive pillars of the economy. He knew China could not hope to compete in the world economy without painful reforms.

Smaller urban enterprises were privatised, merged or simply closed. Thousands upon thousands of inefficient companies disappeared, taking with them tens of millions of jobs. The economist Andrew Batson estimated that the number of people employed by state-owned enterprises fell from 77 million in 1995 to 42 million by the time he left office in 2003.



Critics warned that the mass layoffs would lead to widespread social unrest — the party's greatest fear after the mayhem of the student protests in 1989 that culminated in the Tiananmen Square massacre on June 3-4. Worker unrest was limited and mitigated by his policies, however. He created a basic social welfare system, including rudimentary healthcare — policies his successors failed to build upon.

Zhu effectively smashed the "Iron Rice Bowl" — the cradle-to-grave system of benefits and a job for life that had been one of the fundamental policies championed by Mao. "Even if a minefield or abyss lies before me, I will march straight ahead without looking back and blaze my trail," he pledged.

While many older state workers never found another job, the younger ones retrained and moved to form the backbone of a workforce staffing the nascent private economy that fuelled China's boom.

To further soften the blow, he transferred the apartments — almost all small and run-down — to the ownership of the unemployed workers at nominal or highly subsidised costs. The result was a vibrant property market that brought prosperity to many, but later led in the past decade to catastrophic over-construction by greedy developers and local governments.

Indeed, it was not only inefficient workers and industries that were in his sights. His fiercest anger was directed at corrupt officials. A famed straight-talker, he told colleagues looking to take bribes: "I have prepared 100 coffins here — 99 for corrupt officials and one for myself because I will die of fatigue." His caustic wit and openness — unlike most party apparatchiks — won him a measure of popularity and respect among ordinary Chinese. They gave him such nicknames as "Madman Zhu" and "Boss Zhu". He was also known as China's Gorbachev. He hated the name and when asked about it said "I'm Zhu Rongji".

On economic reform, his slogan was 'grasp the big, let go the small'

Perhaps the most far-reaching achievement of his five-year term as premier was to oversee China's admission in 2001 into the World Trade Organisation, a step that was to turn China into the most vibrant exporting nation on Earth. The negotiations were fraught, fiendishly complicated and required the agreement of every member of the WTO. The toughest talks were with the US.

The whole process almost came to grief in 1999 when Zhu visited Washington with every expectation of signing off, at last, on a deal. But Bill Clinton, mired in the Monica Lewinsky scandal and eager to avoid further controversy, refused, even leaking secret details of the talks.

Zhu, who had offered concessions that he could ill afford because of opposition back home, was left humiliated and furious. President Clinton did not have enough courage, he fumed openly, adding that "you may wind up with nothing". The setback could have cost him his job. The price of staying in office, however, was to offer a Maoist-style "self-criticism" before his fellow members of the Politburo.

Two years later the deal was done. China's trade with the world soared from $510 billion in 2001 to a massive $6.5 trillion at the end of 2025.

Zhu was above all a pragmatist. He had to be. His early years had been fraught with difficulty and tragedy.

Born in 1928 in Changsha, the capital of central Hunan province, he was brought up mainly by two uncles. His father died before he was born and his mother when he was just nine. The family were reputedly descended from Zhu Yuanzhang, the first emperor of the Ming dynasty (1368-98), and were wealthy, owning huge tracts of land and a sprawling mansion. It was a background that was to cause Zhu problems.

He studied electrical engineering at the prestigious Tsinghua University in Beijing, became a student leader and joined the Communist Party in 1949. After graduation he was assigned a job at the powerful State Planning Commission and rose swiftly, appearing on course for a high-flying career. But in 1957 he criticised Mao's economic policies for "irrational high growth". That criticism, coupled with his landlord family past, led to his downfall. He was fired, stripped of his party membership and reassigned as a teacher.

Briefly pardoned in 1962, he was purged again in Mao's 1966-76 Cultural Revolution and sent for "re-education" at a special farm for disgraced officials. He spent five years raising pigs, planting rice and cleaning lavatories. It was an experience he refused to discuss.

He returned to work as an engineer in 1976 and was formally rehabilitated two years later when he was given a position at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences when officials symbolically burnt his letter of expulsion. The following year he was assigned to the State Economic Commission and served as vice-minister until 1987. A year later he was appointed mayor of Shanghai.

His no-nonsense approach and impatience for change frightened lazy officials, lured foreign investors and caught the eye of Deng Xiaoping. His efficiency in Shanghai earned him his first nickname: "One Chop Zhu". He laid the foundations for transforming the fields of Pudong over the river from central Shanghai into a gleaming metropolis and one of the richest districts of China today. In addition, he and his local party boss, Jiang Zemin, won attention by ensuring the 1989 student protests in their city ended peacefully.

Both men were called to Beijing. Zhu became vice-premier with responsibility for the economy in 1991 and governor of the central bank in 1993. He cut inflation from 24.3 per cent in 1994 to minus 0.8 per cent in 1998. He recapitalised lumbering state banks and boosted central government tax revenues.

He insisted that struggling peasants be paid cash for their grain, threatening to "cut off the heads" of any local officials who issued IOUs instead. Asked by reporters about the remark, he quipped: "I cannot admit here that I said that. Wantonly cutting off heads is a violation of human rights and against the law. If this appears in the press and is noticed by some people outside China, I'll get into lots of trouble."

China's economy may have been his life, but Zhu had other interests. He was a passionate devotee of Peking opera, learning to appreciate the art form as a child. It was a passion he shared with his wife, Lao An, during the 70 years of their marriage. The couple had two children, a son and a daughter.

But when it came to opera he was much more than an appreciative audience. He mastered the traditional two-stringed erhu instrument and could also sing, once surprising an audience by taking to the stage during a performance. Asked in Japan to show his skills, he joked: "I imagine that if you don't care for Peking opera then listening to me play the fiddle would sound like a pig being slaughtered."

Zhu Rongji, politician and economist, was born on October 23, 1928. He died on August 12, 2026, aged 97

Register

Trevor Fishlock

Intrepid Times foreign correspondent and 'star wordsmith' of insatiable curiosity who brought a vivid, poetic eye to stories

"In the age before television, my father and mother read the daily news as happy as horses with nosebags," Trevor Fishlock wrote in a memoir entitled *Reporter*. "Among the crumpled pages at their feet I breathed the inky tang and headline lingo of the time: spiv and smog and Skylon, teddy boy, Cold War, prefab, ration book, H-bomb, Iron Curtain, 11-plus, Korea, Churchill, Eisenhower. Groundnuts and Bradman's duck."

Thus it began — a lifetime of reporting (much of it for The Times) from the furthest corners of the world (plus his adopted homeland, Wales) that was driven by an insatiable curiosity and sense of adventure, and enhanced by his vivid prose and eye for detail.

One of the finest foreign correspondents of his age, Fishlock reported on the Soviet war in Afghanistan, Mikhail Gorbachev's experiment with *glasnost* and *perestroika*, the fall of Nicolai Ceausescu in Romania, the US invasion of Grenada, the ousting of "Baby Doc" Duvalier in Haiti, Nelson Mandela's election as South Africa's president, Peter Wright's *Spycatcher* trial in Australia, a catastrophic volcanic eruption in Colombia, an equally deadly earthquake in Armenia and much, much more.

He interviewed Indira Gandhi, Benazir Bhutto, the Dalai Lama and Mother Teresa, who assured him: "Even a journalist can do the work of the Lord." He loved offbeat stories such as chasing down bandit kings in the gorges of Madhya Pradesh, the enthronement of Uganda's King Ronnie, or the annual rodeo held in Huntsville prison, Texas.

Back in Wales, he presented a 14-year television series, *Wild Tracks*, that carried him to the furthest reaches of the country and memorable encounters with coalminers, sheep farmers, coracle makers and Dylan Thomas's barber. "She cut his hair before he left for America in 1953," he wrote. "When she had finished snipping he looked in the mirror and said: 'Lovely, it'll last me a lifetime.' The trip ended in his death in New York."

Fishlock's was, he said, "a life of portraying life, the collective effort, the love of news, the thrill of the story".

Edward Trevor Fishlock was born in 1941 in Hereford, where his mother, Ada, was seeking refuge from the Blitz. Three months after his birth they returned to Portsmouth where his father, Ted, was a Royal Marines sergeant major. He later became a holiday camp entertainment manager on Hayling Island then a publican in Portsmouth.

Fishlock grew up reading books and newspapers. At 16, while a pupil at Portsmouth Southern grammar school, he spotted an advertisement for a junior reporter in the Portsmouth

He became a 'reporter of everything: trials, fires, murders, strikes, crashes'

Evening News. "I saw it as a Kitchener's finger, pointing at me," he said, and was hooked on journalism from the moment he "took a baptismal sniff and pushed back the heavy black door of the reporters' room". He became a "reporter of everything: of trials, of murders, fires, strikes, robberies, crashes, warship homecomings, council meetings, farmers' meetings, union meetings".

He turned freelance, supplying stories to Fleet Street and earning a little extra cash by dictating John Arlott's cricket reports to The Observer by phone. While writing for Hampshire magazine he met and married his first wife, Angela, with whom he had three children, Melanie, Richard and Tim. Encouraged by Leslie Thomas, the bestselling novelist who was then a journalist on the London Evening News, he applied for a job on The Times in 1968 and William Rees-Mogg, the editor, posted him to Wales.

He covered the decline of the coal and steel industries, the investiture of Prince Charles as Prince of Wales, the rise of Welsh nationalism and a parliamentary election in Montgomery that earned the headline: "Will Mr William Williams-Wynne Win?". The first of his 20 books was a collection of Welsh

TREVOR FISHLOCK

Fishlock reported from Afghanistan on the fight against the Soviet occupation

nicknames — the communist Emlyn Kremlin, Dai Drop the paratrooper, and the home secretary, Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, who was inevitably dubbed Dai Bananas.

In 1977 he won a fellowship that took him to the US for eight months, after which he returned to The Times head office in London. There he met his second wife, a parliamentary reporter named Penny Symon, who would spend much of their married life managing his career and organising his many trips abroad. Fishlock never used a cash machine.

In 1980 The Times posted him to India shortly after Indira Gandhi's return to autocratic power. Within three weeks he was reporting on the death of her younger son, Sanjay, in a plane crash. He ventured deep into Afghanistan with mujahidin guerrillas fighting the Soviet occupation, and was escorted back to Pakistan by an opium smuggler. But he spent much of the next three years travelling around the subcontinent with his portable typewriter, filing colourful stories about the people, the places and the dying embers of empire — all of which he turned into another book, *India File*.

He was named foreign reporter of the year in the 1982 British Press Awards, and the next year The Times moved him to New York. From there he covered mafia murders, Liberace's appearance at the Radio City Music Hall, the catastrophic launch of the space shuttle Challenger and a voodoo ceremony in Haiti where, amid the frenzy, a man stepped forward, grabbed a chicken and "appeared to bite its head off in a shower of blood".

In 1986 Max Hastings was appointed editor of The Daily Telegraph and swiftly poached Fishlock, whom he described as a "star wordsmith", to be a roving reporter and, for two years, Moscow correspondent.

And so his itinerant life continued — the Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Reykjavik, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the IRA's Enniskillen bombing, Christina Onassis's funeral in Greece, Australia's 200th anniversary, Hong Kong, Singapore, Brunei, Bangladesh, the Arctic and Papua New Guinea where he interviewed an octogenarian tribal chief named Sir Wamp Wan. "The first wheel Sir Wamp ever saw was on the aircraft that brought (white men) to his homeland in the western highlands," Fishlock wrote.

In 1996 he went freelance again. He settled in Cardiff, launched *Wild Tracks* for Harlech Television, and wrote more books, but the adventures continued. He travelled from the Khyber Pass on the Afghan-Pakistan border to the southern tip of India for a book entitled *Cobra Road*. In 2001 he sailed across the Atlantic from Scotland to Cape Cod and back with John Ridgway, the celebrated yachtsman and rower.

His last great expedition came in 2003. Over 51 days he, Ridgway and four others sailed more than 7,000 miles from Cape Town to Melbourne through snow, sleet and waves so huge that the yacht "toboganned" down them. That vast and turbulent ocean was "the wildest place I have ever been", wrote the man who had been everywhere.

Edward Trevor Fishlock, journalist, was born on February 21, 1941. He died on July 3, 2026, aged 85

Violet Hensley

Fiddle-maker known as the 'Stradivarius of the Ozarks' who preserved the musical spirit of Depression-era America

Violet Hensley was the last remaining link with an old rural, Depression-era America in which music was a communal activity played on rustic homemade instruments on back porches all over the southern and midwestern states.

Known as the "Stradivarius of the Ozarks", the Arkansas mountain range where she lived for 109 years, Hensley made her first fiddle at the age of 15, whittling the instrument at her parents' kitchen table from native Ozark timber. "I made one because I wanted to play one," she said. "We didn't have anything else to do. We didn't have television or radio. And Dad played it, and I guess it just struck me I wanted to play."

Observing the techniques used by her father, who had made his first fiddle in 1888 at the age of 14, she cut the pattern, split the wood with a hatchet and dried it by the fireplace before carving and creating her first instrument and teaching herself how to play it. She made three more in short order but at 18 got married, and raising nine children intervened.

She didn't make another fiddle for 27 years. "I didn't really have time," she said. "We made a garden and canned fruits and vegetables. I made all the clothes we wore. I gave all the shaves

Hensley with some of her instruments

and haircuts, and I did that for the neighbours too. If I wanted a fence built, I built the fence. If I wanted a tree cut, I cut the tree."

However, in 1961 with her family fully grown and the folk music revival in full swing, she began making fiddles again. It also led to her recording the LP *Old Time Fiddle Tunes* with members of her family, touring the country playing at festivals and appearing on TV shows from *The Beverly Hillbillies* to *CBS Evening News*, although she was unable to see them as there was no reception in her Ozarks home.

She went on to make 73 fiddles, all numbered chronologically and prized for their craftsmanship and unique sound. Several are now in museums but her favourite, which she kept for personal use and played for nine decades, was No 4, which she had built in 1934.

Each fiddle took about 250 hours to make, built on her kitchen table using pocket knives and hand saws and planes with no machinery other than a drill press. By the time she had finished whittling an instrument, a five-gallon bucket on the floor had been filled to the brim with shavings.

The wood she cut herself from a nearby forest. "Someone asked me what my secret was of putting the tone into a fiddle," she said. "The tone just comes with the wood as best as I can figure — buckeye, sassafras, pine, spruce, basswood, myrtle, cherry, curly maple, soft maple, bird's eye maple, quilted maple, flamed maple, and just plain hard maple. I've used them all." Failing eyesight eventually caused her to stop making the fiddles but she continued to play and sing and appeared at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville in 2018 at the age of 101.

She was born Violet Brumley in Mount Ida, Arkansas, in 1916, the same year as the violinist and composer Yehudi Menuhin. Her father, George Washington Brumley, and mother, Nora, were sharecroppers and both stood just 5ft 3in tall. "Dad use to say they could put a board across their heads and put a bucket of water on it and they could walk without spillin' it," she told David Ramsey, who interviewed her for Amtrak's magazine in her 100th year.

She grew up on a farm in western Arkansas where her father supplemented his income by making fiddles. "He'd sell one for a dollar or trade one for a milk cow," she recalled. "He traded one for a shotgun and one for a farm wagon." Bartering meant the Depression barely affected them. "My dad didn't have no money in the bank, so the bank closures didn't hit us. We didn't have anything to do with no banks."

In 1935 she married Adren Hensley, borrowing the three dollars for the marriage licence. She wore a yellow and green striped dress she had made herself and he wore his overalls and work shirt. "Our honeymoon began that afternoon by layin' by the Irish taters. The next day, we ploughed corn," she remembered.

Giving birth, she was never in labour for long "because I was in such good shape and had muscles like an ox", she said. "I could put my right hand behind Adren's knees and my left hand on his chest and flip him over my shoulder."

When she took up the fiddle she claimed she heard the music in her head and intuitively transferred it to her instrument. "If I can't play it in my head, I can't put it on the fiddle," she said. In total she made three albums which also featured her daughters Lewonna Nelson and Sandra Flagg, son Calvin Hensley and son-in-law Tim Nelson who replaced Adren in the family band after his death in 1997.

"I've been a barber, a blacksmith, a luthier, a farmer and a logger — cut timber and skidded the logs out of the woods with a mule," she said when she published her memoir *Whittlin' and Fiddlin' My Own Way: The Violet Hensley Story* in 2014. "But my life would be pretty dull without music."

Violet Hensley, fiddler and fiddle-maker extraordinaire, was born on October 21, 1916. She died on August 7, 2026, aged 109

Lives remembered

Justin Hardy

The Lord Dunleath DL writes: We got to know Justin Hardy (obituary, August 12) in 2013 when he was on location at our home, Ballywalter Park in Northern Ireland, during the filming of *37 Days*. The film covered the period from the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand, where our stable yard stood in for Sarajevo, and the outbreak of the First World War. Hardy was both charismatic and charming. As was his wont, on the first day of filming he wore a three-piece suit, complete with waistcoat and tie.

We offered to host a dinner party on the Saturday evening for some of the cast and crew, which was accepted with alacrity. In contrast to the sartorial elegance of the opening day of filming, Hardy arrived for dinner dressed in pyjamas. Dinner was a very convivial affair, with much wine consumed. At the end, Hardy suggested a game of Freda on our billiards table. We declined the offer.

Sir Garfield Sobers

WS Higson writes: In March 1972, at the end of a sailing holiday with friends, we arrived in Barbados looking for some golf. The hotel receptionist directed us to the nearby club at Rockley where we were warmly welcomed, told it was a competition day and allocated local players as partners.

To my amazement, and to the envy of my friends, I found myself playing with Garry Sobers (obituary, July 17). He proved the most friendly, unassuming, relaxed and forgiving playing partner imaginable and, despite my negligible contribution, and to the further chagrin of my friends, we managed to win the competition entirely due to Sobers's masterly stroke play.

David Norman

John Cahill, Riba, writes: I had the privilege of leading, as architect, David Norman's construction team for White Lodge, the Royal Ballet junior school. In order to achieve the listed building consent, David (obituary, August 10) and I constructed a "sales brochure" which we hawked around for a written endorsement before the local planning authority even heard of our intentions. It was typical of David that he procured the foreword written by the then Prince of Wales, our patron.

I remember pitching this to the Crown Estate, which held the lease, looking for endorsement to increase the footprint by 60 per cent in Metropolitan Open Land. The most senior executive of this important landowner (whom David of course knew — he knew everybody) received a 30-minute pitch of typical intensity and passion. It ended with no less than a demand for such an endorsement in a letter — at once. The recipient smiled, raised an eyebrow and calmly said, "Would tomorrow be all right?"

Needless to say, the letter appeared and David got his consent 6-0 in favour by the authority. My life was very much richer for having worked with him (if not a little exhausted).

Tony Ridley

Michael Austin writes: Although I never knew Tony Ridley (obituary, August 10), his quote regarding the successful completion of the Hong Kong Mass Transit Railway — "It was a project with a champion, an excellent and intelligent client, attention to good process and decision-making, strong team spirit and sense of responsibility" — should be carved in stone and set above the board table of the Department for Transport who are ultimately responsible for the HS2 fiasco.

▶ If you would like to add a personal view or recollection to a published obituary, you can send your contribution by email to **tributes@thetimes.co.uk**

Readers' Lives
Remembering loved ones

Ruth MacGillivray
Doctor with an interest in women's health and a love of limericks

Ruth MacGillivray, who died aged 94, appeared in The Times on Saturday June 21, 2025

Commemorate the life of a friend or relative in Readers' Lives, a service in contracted tributes

Call 020 7782 5583 or email readerslives@thetimes.co.uk

THE TIMES

Births, Marriages and Deaths

To book a Birth, Marriage or Death announcement in the Register, visit: newsukadvertising.co.uk for help, please call 020 7782 7553 or email BMDs@thetimes.co.uk

"THE LORD is slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children to the third and the fourth generation.' Numbers 14.18 (NRSV)

Bible verses are provided by the Bible Society

Births

AGUTU on 30th April 2026 to Anna (née Frayling-Cork) and Mikiel, a son, Luke James Michael, brother to Oscar.

FULLER on 23rd May 2026, to James and Moya (née Stirrup), of Sevenscore House, Kent, a son, Frederick James Alured.

RELIHAN on 5th August 2026 in Bordeaux, France, to Harriet Lorna and Tim, joyfully announcing a daughter, Verity Rees.

Forthcoming Marriages

MR W. M. S. HALL
AND MISS R. A. HAMP
The engagement is announced between William, son of Mr and Mrs Timothy Hall of Ecchinswell, Hampshire, and Rebecca, younger daughter of Mr and Mrs Christopher Hamp of Walliswood, Surrey.

MR H. M. T. FABER
AND MISS C. R. RAMIREZ
The engagement is announced between Henry, son of Mr David Faber of London and Mrs Sally Johnson of Marlborough, Wiltshire, and Carolina, eldest daughter of Mr and Mrs Samuel Ramirez of Sutton Place, New York.

Deaths

ASPINALL
Jack, passed away peacefully on 26th July 2026, aged 97. A colonel of the Royal Military Police, then chief constable of MoD police, he was awarded the Queen's Police Medal for distinguished service.
He will be greatly missed by his daughters Susan, Janet and Maryann and all of his family and friends.
Funeral arrangements contact Reynolds Chichester.

DAVIS Roger O'Byrne, much loved by his family and friends, died peacefully at home after a long illness. Formerly a partner at Coopers & Lybrand and PwC. A thanksgiving service will be held at St Andrew and St Mary Church, Langham, Norfolk, on Thursday 3rd September at noon. Donations to Parkinson's UK, if desired, may be sent online to S.T. Sutton Funeral Directors, NR23 1HW.

FARROW Dr David JD, widower of Liz, died at home in Hurst Green, East Sussex, on 9th July 2026. Much-loved father of Simon, Paul and Andrew (dec'd) and loving Grandpa to Matthew, Louis, Samuel and Douglas.

FOSTER Ann Denise (née Geipel) died peacefully on 10th July 2026, aged 88, after a long illness. Widow of John, dearest sister of Doona and Brenda, beloved mother of Amanda, Gemma and Georgie, and stepmother to Simon. Much-loved Granny to Freya, Maia, Ruby, Jack, Evie, Marielle, Sam and Lucas. Thanksgiving service to be held at St Mary's Church, Chiddingfold GU8 4SH on Tuesday 1st September at 11.30am. Donations in Ann's memory to the Alzheimer's Society.

HADOW Valerie Ann (née Browning) died peacefully on 2nd August 2026, aged 96. Beloved wife of the late Gerald Hadow, much-loved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. Funeral service at Boxgrove Priory at 11am on 20th August. No flowers or donations.

HAYCOCK Dr Paul, passed away peacefully at home on 16th July, aged 79. Much-loved husband of Sharne, loving father to Adam, Giles and Fergus. Thanksgiving service will take place later in September. Inquiries to Richard Steel & Partners, 01962 862333.

MACLEOD John Mathieson FIA, died peacefully in his sleep on 28th July 2026, aged 95. Beloved husband for 57 years of the late Natalie; dearest father to Helen, Rosalie and Andrew, father-in-law of Nicholas, Paul and Judith, dear grandfather to Charlotte, Louisa, Thomas and Angus, and Pop to his four great-grandchildren. Funeral service on Friday 28th August at noon at St Mary's Church, Wimbledon, London SW19 7BP. Family flowers only.

TOOMEY Lt Cdr Brian Richard RN (Retd), husband and best friend of his late wife Mary, died peacefully on 4th August 2026, after a short illness. Much-loved father of Richard, Charles and James, grandfather and great-grandfather. Funeral on Friday 4th September at Taunton Crematorium. No flowers please — donations instead to ARC Inspire Taunton. Details of funeral and reception available from E White & Son Funeral Directors, Taunton, 01823 272183.

WARRILLOW Kathleen (Kate) Mary (née Turner) died peacefully on 8th July 2026, aged 81. Dearly loved wife to Malcolm, wonderful mother to Jeremy, Tim and Nick, and beloved grandmother to ten glorious grandchildren. Funeral to be held at St Mary's, Barnes, on 3rd September at 1.30pm.

WINNING Robert Anthony passed away peacefully on 8th August 2026, aged 82. Beloved husband of Fay, much-loved father of Andrew (decd), Nicholas, Peter and Christopher, and devoted grandfather. Greatly missed by all his family and friends. Private family cremation. Memorial service to be arranged. Donations, if desired, to St Christopher's.

In Memoriam – Private

ANA ISABEL CASTRO
Remembering Ana 2023.
Always in my heart and soul. Eric.

LEGAL, PUBLIC, COMPANY & PARLIAMENTARY NOTICES

To place notices for these sections please call 020 7782 7553

Notices are subject to confirmation and should be received by 11.30am three days prior to insertion

Court Circular

St James's Palace
13th August, 2026
The Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh today attended the European Athletics Championships at Alexander Stadium, Walsall Road, Birmingham.

Legal Notices

Notice of Appointment of Voluntary Liquidator
Gold Diamond D Aberdeen 2005 Ltd
(In Voluntary Liquidation)
Company Number 1064146

NOTICE is hereby given pursuant to Section 204(1)(b) of the BVI Business Companies Act, 2004 (as amended) that Gold Diamond D Aberdeen 2005 Ltd is in voluntary liquidation. The voluntary liquidation commenced on 19 June 2026. The Voluntary Liquidator is Colm Edwards of Richmond Advisory (BVI) Limited, 2nd Floor, Palm Grove House, Wickhams Cay, P.O. Box 3340, Road Town, Tortola, British Virgin Islands.

Dated this 14 day of August 2026
Colm Edwards
Voluntary Liquidator

The simple way to place your Birth, Marriage or Death announcement in the Register. Available 24 hours a day. Go to: **newsukadvertising.co.uk**

Legal Notices

ALAN PAUL ROBBENS
Late of Hatfield, Hertfordshire died at Watford, Hertfordshire on 30/11/2024

LAI MEI HO
Late of Devon died at Exeter, Devon on 27 January 2024

The kin of the above named are requested to apply to the Treasury Solicitor (BV), HMRC Croydon Regional Centre, 1 Ruskin Square, Croydon, CR0 2WF, United Kingdom or at www.gov.uk/bonavacantia, failing which the Treasury Solicitor may take steps to administer the estate.

Government Legal Department

CR-2026-005002
IN THE HIGH COURT
OF
JUSTICE
BUSINESS AND PROPERTY
COURTS
OF
ENGLAND AND WALES
COMPANIES COURT (Ch D)
IN THE MATTER
OF
OCTOPUS APOLLO
VCT PLC
AND
IN THE MATTER
OF
THE COMPANIES ACT 2006

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a Claim Form was on the 31 July 2026 issued in His Majesty's High Court of Justice seeking the confirmation of the cancellation of the share premium account of the above named Company.
AND NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that the said Claim Form is directed to be heard before the Insolvency and Companies Court Judge at the Royal Courts of Justice, The Rolls Building, 7 Rolls Building, Fetter Lane, London EC4A 1NL on Tuesday 25 August 2026 at 10.30am.
Any Creditor or Shareholder of the said Company desiring to oppose the making of an Order for the confirmation of the said cancellation of share premium account should appear at the time of the hearing in person or by Counsel for that purpose. A copy of the said Claim Form will be furnished to any such person requiring the same by the undermentioned Solicitors on payment of the regulated charge for the same.
DATED this 14th day of August 2026
Howard Kennedy LLP
No. 1 London Bridge
London SE1 9BG
Ref: SH3
Tel: 020 3755 6000
Fax: 020 3650 6847
Solicitors for the above-named Company

CR-2026-003933
IN THE HIGH COURT
OF
JUSTICE
BUSINESS AND PROPERTY
COURTS
OF
ENGLAND AND WALES
COMPANIES COURT (Ch D)
IN THE MATTER
OF
TRIPLE POINT VENTURE
VCT PLC
AND
IN THE MATTER
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Howard Kennedy LLP
No. 1 London Bridge
London SE1 9BG
Ref: SH3
Tel: 020 3755 6000
Fax: 020 3650 6847
Solicitors for the above-named Company

A-level results

KEY
M Mixed – **B** Boys – **G** Girls
Comp Comprehensive – **Sel** Selective
Ind Independent – **RC** Roman Catholic

	Pupils	Exam entries	% A*	% A*,A,B
Queen Elizabeth's School, Barnet, B, Sel, State	179	598	62	97.8
South Hampstead High School, Camden, G, Sel, Ind	65	214	47.7	97.2
London Acad of Excellence, Newham, M, Comp, State	245	764	38	95.4
Guildford High School, Surrey, G, Sel, Ind	103	340	51.8	95.3
Alleyn's School, Southwark, M, Sel, Ind	178	567	36.3	95.2
Wimbledon High School GDST Sel, State	94	290	32.1	95.2
Imperial College London Mathematics School, Barnet, M, Comp, State	60	185	64.9	95.1
University College School, Camden, M, Comp, Ind	172	540	37	94.8
King's College London Maths School, Lambeth, M, Comp, State	77	231	71.9	94.8
Epsom College, Surrey, M, Comp, Ind	214	657	30.6	94.7
Lady Eleanor Holles School, Richmond upon Thames, G, Comp, Ind	98	315	39	94.6
St Olave's & St Saviour's Grammar School, Bromley, B, Sel, State	221	761	37.1	94.2
Wilson's School, Sutton, B, Sel, State	186	659	43.9	94.1
St Swithun Wells Catholic Primary School, Hampshire, M, Comp, State	68	219	26.5	94.1
City of London School, City of London, B, Comp, Ind	159	521	40.9	94
Putney High School GDST, Wandsworth, G, Sel, Ind	89	279	31.9	93.9
Pate's Grammar School, Gloucestershire, M, Sel, State	272	977	42.9	93.9
Merchant Taylors' School, Hertfordshire, B, Sel, Ind	146	492	40.4	93.5
Colfe's School, Greenwich, M, Sel, Ind	100	298	24.2	93.3
James Allen's Girls' School, Southwark, G, Comp, Ind	107	346	37.9	93.1
St Dunstan's College, Lewisham, M, Sel, Ind	94	292	28.1	92.5
Croydon High School, Croydon, G, Comp, Ind	43	132	22.7	92.4
Bancroft's School Comp, State	121	394	34.3	92.4
Tiffin School, Kingston upon Thames, B, Sel, State	268	898	36.7	91.9
King Edward VI High School for Girls, Birmingham, G, Sel, Ind	91	298	37.6	91.3
King Edward VI Grammar School, Essex, M, Sel, State	191	688	31.5	91
Exeter Mathematics School, Devon, M, Sel, State	62	207	51.7	90.8
Caterham School, Surrey, M, Sel, Ind	150	491	33.8	90.6
Sir William Perkins's School, Surrey, G, Sel, Ind	46	158	22.8	90.5
The Tiffin Girls' School, Kingston upon Thames, G, Sel, State	185	589	36.2	90.5
Surrey Maths School, Surrey, M, Comp	83	284	37.7	90.1
Notting Hill & Ealing High School GDST Sel, State	75	236	22.5	89.8
Eltham College, Bromley, M, Sel, Ind	107	342	30.1	89.8
Wallington County Grammar School, Sutton, B, Sel, State	183	615	27	89.8
Sir Thomas Rich's School, Gloucestershire, B, Sel, State	225	700	23.3	89.4
Dulwich College, Southwark, M, Comp, Ind	236	792	30.1	89.4
Dame Alice Owen's School, Hertfordshire, M, Comp, State	230	769	34.3	89.2
Reading School, Reading, B, Sel, State	179	602	38	88.9
Whitgift School, Croydon, B, Comp, Ind	209	667	28.9	88.3
Yavneh College, Hertfordshire, M, Comp, State	118	363	23.7	88.2
The National Mathematics & Science College, Coventry, M, Sel, Ind	68	251	43	88
Watford Grammar School for Boys, Hertfordshire, B, Comp, State	239	785	17.3	87.9
King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Boys, Birmingham, B, Sel, State	166	549	34.2	87.6
King Edward's School, Bath & North East Somerset, M, Comp, Ind	135	419	24.3	87.6
The St Thomas the Apostle College, Southwark, B, Comp, State	144	398	14.3	87.2
Colyton Grammar School, Devon, M, Sel, State	142	544	31.2	87.1
King Edward VI School, Warwickshire, B, Sel, State	207	674	27.3	87.1
Oxford High School GDST, Oxfordshire, G, Comp, Ind	63	205	40.5	86.8
Canford School, Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole, M, Sel, Ind	146	454	24.9	86.6
King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Girls, Birmingham, G, Sel, State	174	541	23.5	86.5
Howell's School GDST Sel, State	81	250	28.4	86.4
Loreto Grammar School, Trafford, G, Sel, State	142	433	21.7	86.4
The Latymer School, Enfield, M, Sel, State	199	649	26.7	86
Dr Challoner's Grammar School, Buckinghamshire, B, Sel, State	231	763	26.6	85.8
The Judd School, Kent, B, Sel, State	271	929	25.2	85.4
Altrincham Grammar School for Boys, Trafford, B, Sel, State	185	608	30.8	85.2
West London Free School, Hammersmith & Fulham, M, Comp, State	133	404	26.7	84.9
Bromley High School, Bromley, G, Comp, Ind	50	160	18.8	84.4
Hurtwood House School, Surrey, M, Comp, Ind	133	414	22.2	83.8
Chelmsford County High School for Girls, Essex, G, Sel, State	184	652	21.3	83.7
Mercia School, Sheffield, M, Comp, State	66	208	24.5	83.7
King Edward VI Five Ways School, Birmingham, M, Sel, State	207	757	23	83.1
Mossbourne Comm Acad, Hackney, M, Comp, State	187	564	24.8	83
Belfast High School, NI, M, Sel	121	376	16.2	83
Chesham Grammar School, Buckinghamshire, M, Sel, State	197	625	19.2	82.9
University of Liverpool Mathematics School, Liverpool, M, Comp, State	54	166	29.5	82.5
The Royal Grammar School, Buckinghamshire, B, Sel, State	204	650	19.8	82.2
Tauheedul Islam Girls' High School, Blackburn with Darwen, G, Comp, State	70	218	14.7	82.1
Newstead Wood School, Bromley, G, Sel, State	211	653	18.7	81.6
Leeds Mathematic School, Leeds, M, Comp	97	326	28.8	81.6
Highsted Grammar School, Kent, G, Sel, State	80	308	8.4	81.5
Northampton High School, West Northamptonshire, G, Comp, Ind	31	96	9.4	81.2
The King's School Canterbury, Kent, M, Sel, Ind	207	643	21.3	81.2
Sheffield High School, Sheffield, G, Comp, Ind	72	220	27.3	80.9
The King's School, Cheshire West & Chester, M, Sel, Ind	126	387	16.5	80.6
Bishop Vesey's Grammar School, Birmingham, B, Sel, State	242	755	24.1	80.5
Bohunt School, Hampshire, M, Comp, State	160	530	23.2	80.4
Caistor Grammar School, Lincolnshire, M, Sel, State	70	222	18.9	79.7
Lancaster University School of Mathematics, Lancashire, M, Comp, State	46	167	32.3	79.6
St Mary's Grammar School, NI	151	428	11.9	79.4
Saint Ambrose College, Trafford, B, Sel, State	154	480	14.4	79.2
Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School, Medway, B, Sel, State	224	683	16.1	79.1
Tunbridge Wells Girls' Grammar School, Kent, G, Sel, State	135	407	20.4	78.9
Chislehurst & Sidcup Grammar School, Bexley, M, Sel, State	290	903	14.1	78.6
Yarm School, Stockton-on-Tees, M, Comp, Ind	134	430	22.3	78.4
The Leys School, Cambridgeshire, M, Sel, Ind	106	336	16.4	78.3
Stroud High School, Gloucestershire, G, Sel, State	161	491	17.3	78.2
Bishop's Stortford College, Hertfordshire, M, Comp, Ind	106	354	17.8	78
Belfast Royal Acad, Belfast	195	598	15.6	77.9
Lancaster Royal Grammar School, Lancashire, M, Sel, State	204	643	18	77.6
Woodbridge School, Suffolk, M, Comp, Ind	71	217	12.9	77.4
The King's School in Macclesfield, Cheshire East, M, Comp, Ind	101	305	15.7	77
Southend High School for Girls, Southend-on-Sea, G, Sel, State	147	468	15	76.9
Banbridge Academy, NI, M, Sel	144	438	16.2	76.7
The Skinners' School, Kent, B, Sel, State	175	569	19.2	76.3
Norwich High School for Girls GDST, Norfolk, G, Sel, Ind	62	188	15.4	76.1

This table shows A-level results submitted by schools and colleges to The Times. Where schools have identical scores the table ranks them according to two decimal places. Table compiled by Nicola Woolcock, Georgia Lambert, Mary Downer, Jason Manning, Georgie Middlemiss and George Willoughby.

Free thinking is our key, says the top Times head

Georgia Lambert, Georgie Middlemiss

Queen Elizabeth's School in north London is celebrating a stellar set of A-level results. With 62 per cent of grades at A* and 98 per cent at A*-A grades, the selective state boys' grammar school has come first on the Times results day league table.

The headmaster, Neil Enright, said that he was "absolutely thrilled", attributing the results to "the culmination of seven years of free-thinking scholarship".

The school has consistently ranked among the country's strongest A-level performers, recording more than 95 per cent A*-A grades for the past 21 years.

But this year marks a striking leap in the proportion of A* grades among its pupils, rising from 53 per cent last year to 62 per cent.

Enright said the results reflected the school's determination to tailor each boy's education to his own interests. "There isn't, and there shouldn't be, a typical QE boy," he said.

Medicine, economics and PPE (philosophy, politics and economics) remain the most popular university choices, but the breadth of ambition stands out. One pupil is taking up an art foundation course after securing four A*s, while two others will combine their studies at Cambridge with choral scholarships.

"It was lovely and so rewarding to see their happy faces — literally jumping for joy," said Enright, praising the pupils' "phenomenal hard work" and the school's "brilliant colleagues".

He puts the results down to an educational philosophy that promotes "flair and higher-order thinking" where teachers and students focus on class environments that encourage discussion, debate and the challenging of viewpoints.

This year, 40 students from QE boys will take up places at Oxford and Cambridge, and 95 per cent of confirmed offers among students are for Russell Group universities.

The school also puts considerable emphasis on life beyond the classroom. Enright points to 115 societies running each week, designed to give pupils the "rounded and grounded experience that they need". The school's choir alone has 160 members.

QE is now also preparing to extend its model overseas. Working with Global Education (GEDU), the school plans to open two branches in India and one in the United Arab Emirates.

Maths whizz and long Covid teen are A-level stars

Case studies

Dominic Pugaciauskas
Dominic Pugaciauskas, right, could "count before he could speak" and has achieved an A* in A-level maths. The 12-year-old pupil at Solihull School completed the A-level in just a year, scoring 100 per cent in one of his papers.

Nola Smith
A teenager who was forced to abandon mainstream

Results by subject

All UK candidates	Number	A* %	A %	B %	C %	D %	E %	U %
All subjects								
Female	488,643	9.1	28	56.9	79.8	92.5	97.9	100
Male	417,782	10.2	28.9	54.5	76.8	90.5	97.1	100
Accounting								
Female	827	1.7	12.3	34.6	59.3	80.5	93.6	100
Male	1,993	1.3	12.2	34.6	61.6	83.7	94.8	100
Ancient History								
Female	465	2.6	19.1	55.9	82.2	93.3	98.3	100
Male	517	1.5	18.8	56.5	81.4	94	98.5	100
Art & Design subjects								
Female	32,169	17.6	37.4	70.6	90.6	97.7	99.7	100
Male	10,451	13.2	28.2	58.5	83.8	95.1	99.2	100
Biblical Hebrew								
Female	51	43.1	80.4	92.2	96.1	100	100	100
Male	22	45.5	63.6	86.4	90.9	100	100	100
Biology								
Female	48,050	9.2	27.8	51.6	72.6	88.1	96.3	100
Male	25,875	9.4	27.8	50.7	71.7	87.3	96.1	100
Built Environment								
Female	7	0	0	28.6	71.4	100	100	100
Male	14	0	0	7.1	28.6	71.4	100	100
Business Studies								
Female	19,031	5.1	18.5	50.2	77.3	92.3	97.9	100
Male	27,946	3.6	14.7	46.4	76.7	92.5	98	100
Chemistry								
Female	37,123	8	30.2	54.4	73.6	87.5	96	100
Male	28,418	11.3	35.1	58.4	75.9	88	96	100
Classical Civilisation								
Female	2,527	5.5	28.3	64.1	86	96.4	99.2	100
Male	1,181	4	21.2	53.4	82.2	94.7	99	100
Classical Greek								
Female	77	45.5	80.5	90.9	97.4	98.7	98.7	100
Male	91	42.9	82.4	96.7	100	100	100	100
Computing								
Female	3,782	7.8	28.8	52.1	73.1	88	96.6	100
Male	16,227	6	24.7	48.1	70.1	86.5	95.7	100
Design and Technology								
Female	3,584	8	24.4	54.6	80.2	93.9	98.5	100
Male	7,290	4.9	16.9	41.9	71.2	89.2	97.5	100
Digital Technology								
Female	316	11.7	30.7	59.5	84.8	95.3	98.7	100
Male	726	10.6	25.1	55	79.2	91.7	97.4	100
Drama								
Female	5,502	6.5	24.3	64.9	90.1	98.5	99.9	100
Male	1,895	5.8	21.4	58.6	86.4	97.2	99.6	100
Economics								
Female	14,308	8.7	32.5	63.3	83.4	94.1	98.3	100
Male	32,849	7.3	29.2	61.1	82.9	93.8	98.1	100
Electronics								
Female	60	8.3	23.3	41.7	65	80	96.7	100
Male	638	14.9	36.1	52.4	70.7	86.8	95.8	100
English Language								
Female	9,713	2.7	13.1	46.2	80.1	96.1	99.4	100
Male	3,479	2	10.2	38.8	75.2	94.3	99.1	100
English Language & Literature								
Female	5,648	3.8	15.3	47.7	82.1	96.5	99.4	100
Male	1,734	3.1	13.3	41.6	75.7	94.8	99	100
English Literature								
Female	28,692	9.1	24.9	57.6	83.4	96.2	99.3	100
Male	7,504	10.1	24.9	54.9	81.8	95	99	100
Environmental Science								
Female	1,219	5.3	17.3	42.2	67.6	84.4	94.3	100
Male	1,302	3.2	12.3	37	63	84.3	95.2	100
Film Studies								
Female	4,534	3.4	18.4	64.7	92.3	98.3	99.5	100
Male	3,227	1.7	12.6	54.9	86.7	97.3	99.3	100
Food Preparation & Nutrition								
Female	477	7.3	35.2	69.6	91	98.5	99.6	100
Male	59	3.4	15.3	30.5	78	91.5	96.6	100
French								
Female	4,738	11.3	38.6	67	85.8	95.4	98.8	100
Male	2,150	11.7	40	68.2	87.3	95.9	99	100
Geography								
Female	15,625	8.4	31.3	62.8	85.5	95.6	98.9	100
Male	18,503	3.9	19.2	48.2	76.8	92.7	98.2	100
Geology								
Female	330	10	26.7	47.6	71.2	87.9	99.4	100
Male	627	9.4	26.5	50.7	73.2	91.7	97.8	100
German								
Female	1,322	15.4	44.5	70.6	88.6	96.7	99.3	100
Male	972	16.4	47.7	74.1	89.2	97.3	99.5	100

ELEANOR BENTALL

Queen Elizabeth's School boys celebrate. Below, Dominic Pugaciauskas, 12, got an A*

schooling after developing long Covid has secured a place at University College London, having achieved an A* and two A grades in her A-levels.

Nola Smith, 19, was diagnosed with long Covid about five years ago and became bed-bound, suffering from brain fog, chronic fatigue and other health problems. She was placed on the special educational needs and disabilities register.

Unable to continue her GCSEs in mainstream education, Smith turned to online learning.

With limited subject choices on offer, she taught herself four GCSEs, including Spanish, which she learnt from BBC Bitesize, and "fast-tracked" herself in four months.

"When I was diagnosed with long Covid I ended up [distance learning] because I was not well enough to go to a normal school," she said.

"By the time I was ready to do my A-levels, it was too late to rejoin a mainstream school so I had to go to King's InterHigh. It's been a good way of being able to be flexible and to manage my symptoms and do A-levels."

Smith joined King's InterHigh, an online school for pupils aged 7 to 18, in 2024, where its flexible model enabled her to continue her education while managing her health. Her predicted A-level grades were BBB, but she went on to achieve an A* in biology and A grades in chemistry and Spanish. She will begin studying Spanish and history of art at University College London in September.

The Earl of Wessex

The King's nephew, the Earl of Wessex, will attend the Royal Agricultural University after achieving the grades needed for his chosen course. James, 18, will study for a rural land and property management degree at the university in Cirencester.

James's grades and the subjects he studied at the private Radley College in Oxfordshire have not been disclosed.

The earl's degree course is described on the university's website as teaching "the fundamentals of rural professional practice as well as planning and development, law, valuation, building construction and management".

His sister, Lady Louise Windsor, was watched by their parents, the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, when she graduated from the University of St Andrews this year with a degree in English and international relations.

Michaela Community School

Katharine Birbalsingh, who describes herself as Britain's strictest headmistress, has praised pupils at Michaela Community School in Wembley after another strong set of exam results. Serving a disadvantaged community, the school said its pupils achieved an average of AAA across all subjects, with one in three exams awarded an A* grade, and nearly 70 per cent of all grades being A* or A.

The school, which boasts consistently good results, said on its website: "We are incredibly proud of our students."

It added: "These results reflect their hard work, discipline, and dedication. At Michaela, we believe every child can achieve excellence, whatever their background, and today's results prove it."

	Pupils	Exam entries	% A*	% A*,A,B
Westcliff High School for Boys Acad, Southend-on-Sea, B, Sel, State	183	604	19	75.8
Newcastle High School for Girls, Newcastle upon Tyne, G, Comp, Ind	52	157	10.2	75.8
Hasmonean High School for Girls, Barnet, G, Comp, State	67	185	22.7	75.7
Queen Mary's Grammar School, Walsall, B, Sel, State	226	713	14.6	75.6
John Hampden Grammar School, Buckinghamshire, B, Sel, State	173	543	14	74.8
Parmiter's School, Hertfordshire, M, Comp, State	194	606	18	74.6
St George's School, Hertfordshire, M, Comp, State	196	637	19.6	73.6
Nottingham Girls' High School, Nottingham, G, Sel, Ind	72	219	16.9	73.1
Redmaids' High School, Bristol,, G, Sel, Ind	72	222	25.2	73
Aylesbury High School, Buckinghamshire, G, Sel, State	216	680	12.2	72.8

	Pupils	Exam entries	% A*	% A*,A,B
Ashmole Acad, Barnet, M, Comp, State	234	706	13	72.7
The King's School, Lincolnshire, B, Sel, State	168	511	17.4	72.6
Shrewsbury High School, Shropshire, M, Sel, Ind	34	102	14.7	72.5
Durham Sixth Form Centre, County Durham, M, Comp, State	715	1,746	10.6	72.2
Durham Johnston Comp School, County Durham, M, Comp, State	166	485	13.6	71.5
St Dominic's Sixth Form College, Harrow, M, Comp, State	746	2,292	11.6	71.4
Kimbolton School, Cambridgeshire, M, Comp, Ind	96	335	11.9	71.3
The Holt School, Wokingham, G, Comp, State	135	408	14	71.3
Lancaster Girls' Grammar School, Lancashire, G, Sel, State	129	394	16.2	70.8
Lawrence Sheriff School, Warwickshire, B, Sel, State	226	681	11.5	70.6

	Pupils	Exam entries	% A*	% A*,A,B
The Coopers' Company & Coborn School, Havering, M, Comp, State	254	774	7	70.5
Fulford School, York, M, Comp, State	198	579	12.4	70.3
Grey Court School, Richmond upon Thames, M, Comp, State	165	502	15.9	70.1
The Kingston Acad, Kingston upon Thames, M, Comp, State	105	334	13.2	69.8
The Aldenham Foundation, Hertfordshire, M, Comp, Ind	93	279	13.6	69.5
Ripon Grammar School, North Yorkshire, M, Sel, State	164	512	18.2	69.5
Kesteven & Grantham Girls' School, Lincolnshire, G, Sel, State	145	431	16.5	69.4
Avanti House School, Harrow, M, Comp, State	143	436	13.1	69.3
Greenford High School, Ealing, M, Comp, State	236	532	9.8	69.2
Highworth Grammar School, Kent, G, Sel, State	234	715	8.7	68.4
Archbishop Holgate's School, York, M, Comp, State	128	311	10.6	68.2
Cardinal Newman College, Lancashire, M, Comp, State	1,503	4,106	11.1	67.3
Maidstone Grammar School, Kent, B, Sel, State	179	588	11.6	66.5
Weald of Kent Grammar School, Kent, G, Sel, State	238	719	11.5	66.3
St Columba's College, Hertfordshire, M, Comp, Ind	73	211	10.9	65.9
Birkdale School, Sheffield, M, Sel, Ind	120	359	11.1	65.7
Howard of Effingham School, Surrey, M, Comp, State	150	424	12.7	65.6
Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Lincolnshire, M, Sel, State	87	268	10.4	65.3
The Sixth Form College Farnborough, Hampshire, M, Comp, State	1,802	4,588	11.6	65.2
The Cotswold Acad, Gloucestershire, M, Comp, State	159	482	12.9	65.1
Wolverhampton Girls' High School, Wolverhampton, G, Sel, State	154	479	8.4	64.9
High Storrs School, Sheffield, M, Comp, State	232	678	11.8	64.7
The Queen Elizabeth's High School, Lincolnshire, M, Sel, State	99	300	9.7	64.7
The Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School, Ealing, M, Comp, State	205	604	6.3	64.6
Horsforth School, Leeds, M, Comp, State	202	508	9.3	64.6
Watford Grammar School for Girls, Hertfordshire, G, Comp, State	177	543	13.3	64.5
South Wilts Grammar School, Wiltshire, G, Sel, State	218	799	11.9	64.5
Wimbledon College, Merton, B, Comp, State	115	317	6.6	64.4
Whitley Bay High School, North Tyneside, M, Comp, State	269	732	7.2	64.2
Wakefield Girls' High School, Wakefield, G, Sel, Ind	48	144	12.5	63.9
Winstanley College, Wigan, M, Comp, State	973	2,530	10.1	62.8
Malmesbury School, Wiltshire, M, Comp, State	129	420	9	62.6
Graveney School, Wandsworth, M, Comp, State	442	1,193	10.6	62.6
The Cherwell School, Oxfordshire, M, Comp, State	306	1,110	14	62.5
The Hollyfield School & Sixth Form Centre, Kingston upon Thames, M, Comp, State	145	338	10.1	62.4
Saffron Walden County High School, Essex, M, Comp, State	260	704	10.9	62.2
Bournemouth School for Girls, Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole, G, Sel, State	198	600	11	61.8
Ilkley Grammar School, Bradford, M, Comp, State	311	840	12.4	61.7
King's Acad Bay House, Hampshire, M, Comp, State	159	455	7.9	61.5
Keswick School, Cumbria, M, Comp, State	137	394	5.3	60.9
Wren Acad Finchley, Barnet, M, Comp, State	146	462	8.4	60.2
St Ignatius College, Enfield, B, Comp, State	87	263	8.4	59.3
Wheatley Park School, Oxfordshire, M, Comp, State	117	316	8.5	59.2
Hasmonean High School for Boys, Barnet, B, Comp, State	68	192	8.9	57.8
King Edward VI Aston School, Birmingham, B, Sel, State	149	444	7.9	57.7
Maidstone Grammar School for Girls, Kent, G, Sel, State	169	509	7.1	57.6
Formby High School, Sefton, M, Comp, State	115	271	3.3	56.1
Reach Acad Feltham, Hounslow, M, Comp, State	74	194	5.2	55.2
Highlands School, Enfield, M, Comp, State	188	529	6.4	55
Calday Grange Grammar School, Wirral, B, Sel, State	178	543	11	54
Ringwood School Acad, Hampshire, M, Comp, State	147	358	9.2	53.9
King David High School, Liverpool, M, Comp, State	67	212	5.2	53.8
The Broxbourne School, Hertfordshire, M, Comp, State	132	394	6.6	53.3
Torquay Boys' Grammar School, Torbay, B, Sel, State	106	322	6.2	52.8
Tytherington School, Cheshire East, M, Comp, State	124	330	8.2	52.7
Whitburn CofE Acad, South Tyneside, M, Comp, State	82	231	5.2	52.4
Backwell School, North Somerset, M, Comp, State	137	377	9.3	52.3
The Gryphon School, Dorset, M, Comp, State	179	502	8.2	52.2
Outwood Acad Easingwold, North Yorkshire, M, Comp, State	70	209	6.7	52.2
Kirkbie Kendal School, Cumbria, M, Comp, State	67	208	7.2	50.5
Bingley Grammar School, Bradford, M, Comp, State	135	326	9.2	50.3
The Minster School, Nottinghamshire, M, Comp, State	162	471	7.2	48.6
The Khalsa Acad Wolverhampton, Wolverhampton, M, Comp, State	52	145	0.7	46.2
Netherthorpe School, Derbyshire, M, Comp, State	73	203	3.4	45.8
The Sandon School, Essex, M, Comp, State	76	186	3.8	45.7
St Bede's Catholic College, Bristol,, M, Comp, State	136	480	4.8	45.4
Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Derbyshire, M, Comp, State	131	361	6.9	44.9
Chestnut Grove School, Wandsworth, M, Comp, State	131	330	9.1	44.8
AKS Lytham, Lancashire, M, Sel, Ind	43	127	13.4	44.1
Weatherhead High School, Wirral, G, Comp, State	101	228	2.6	43.4
Lady Margaret School, Hammersmith & Fulham, G, Comp, State	102	308	14.9	40.3
Spalding High School, Lincolnshire, G, Sel, State	135	425	3.3	39.8
King Edward VI College Stourbridge, Dudley, M, Comp, State	1,278	3,581	7	30.7
Hutton CofE Grammar School, Lancashire, B, Comp, State	66	1,452	0.5	5.5

All UK candidates	Number	A* %	A %	B %	C %	D %	E %	U %
Health & Social Care								
Female	3,181	0.8	17.8	58.7	89.2	98.2	99.6	100
Male	364	0.3	4.7	31.3	74.5	95.1	99.5	100
Health & Social Care (Double Award)								
Female	812	0.2	8.9	48.3	87.9	98	99.8	100
Male	44	0	4.5	31.8	81.8	90.9	100	100
History								
Female	25,661	6.4	26.4	60.5	84.9	95.9	99.1	100
Male	21,299	5.2	22.7	56.2	83.2	95.5	99	100
Irish								
Female	240	8.8	53.8	82.1	93.8	97.1	98.3	100
Male	135	10.4	54.1	80.7	95.6	99.3	99.3	100
Latin								
Female	498	22.9	63.3	80.1	90	93.6	97.2	100
Male	361	25.8	68.4	85.6	92.2	95.8	98.9	100
Law								
Female	10,737	5.5	18.7	42.2	66.7	86.4	96.5	100
Male	5,789	3.6	13.8	35.8	61.4	82.7	95.6	100
Life & Health Science (Double Award)								
Female	132	3	21.2	54.5	87.9	100	100	100
Male	92	6.5	10.9	45.7	82.6	95.7	95.7	100
Life & Health Science (Single Award)								
Female	408	2.5	10.3	34.3	65.7	86.3	97.8	100
Male	235	0.4	6	31.1	67.7	90.2	97.9	100
Mathematics								
Female	42,761	15	40.3	61.2	78.3	90.1	96.7	100
Male	72,619	19.4	43.8	62.6	78.2	89.4	96.3	100

All UK candidates	Number	A* %	A %	B %	C %	D %	E %	U %
Mathematics (Further)								
Female	5,550	28.1	57.2	80.3	90.6	95.6	98.1	100
Male	15,482	29.2	59.4	80.6	90.8	95.9	98.3	100
Media Studies								
Female	9,384	2.5	17.4	54.5	85.2	97	99.5	100
Male	5,625	1	8.2	35.9	72.3	93.4	99.1	100
Music								
Female	2,210	7.1	23	49.7	76.9	92.8	98.1	100
Male	2,896	7.7	26.9	54.9	78.7	93.2	98.9	100
Other Modern Languages								
Female	4,067	38.3	69.4	87.9	95.3	98.2	99.2	100
Male	2,877	34.3	64.4	86	94.8	97.6	98.7	100
Performing / Expressive Arts								
Female	1,135	7.9	27.1	59	85.2	96.6	99.4	100
Male	109	6.4	18.3	54.1	84.4	98.2	100	100
Philosophy								
Female	1,975	4.8	20.2	48.3	70.8	86	96.4	100
Male	1,373	6.7	27.1	55.1	76.8	90.3	97.5	100
Physical Education								
Female	5,434	9	27.7	56.7	79.4	92.9	98.2	100
Male	7,623	3.5	14.8	40.3	68.2	87.6	96.9	100
Physics								
Female	10,854	10.5	30.9	53.2	72.9	86.6	95.5	100
Male	34,946	11.8	33	54.7	73.2	87	95.8	100
Political Studies								
Female	12,460	8.3	28.4	59.9	81.9	93	97.8	100
Male	12,364	7.9	26.4	58.6	82.5	93.8	98	100

All UK candidates	Number	A* %	A %	B %	C %	D %	E %	U %
Psychology								
Female	59,844	7	22.6	51.7	76.5	91.2	97.7	100
Male	19,357	2.9	12.1	35.9	63.5	84.1	95.4	100
Religious Studies								
Female	11,214	6.1	25.5	57.3	82	94.4	98.6	100
Male	4,828	5.8	25.3	55.8	81.4	93.7	98.5	100
Sociology								
Female	33,624	6.1	20.8	52.2	78.7	93.2	98.3	100
Male	9,938	3.4	12.8	38.9	69.3	88.8	96.7	100
Spanish								
Female	5,616	10.9	35.2	66.2	85.8	95.3	99.1	100
Male	2,818	8.8	34.5	65.6	85.4	95.2	99	100
Statistics								
Female	324	2.2	17	35.2	60.8	80.9	94.4	100
Male	816	1.3	10.8	33.3	56.4	76.8	92	100
Welsh First Language								
Female	211	5.7	19.4	46.4	78.2	93.4	99.5	100
Male	51	2	11.8	31.4	60.8	88.2	100	100
Welsh Second Language								
Female	134	9.7	30.6	47	73.1	94	97.8	100
Male	51	9.8	25.5	47.1	70.6	78.4	92.2	100

Weather

Today Hot, dry and sunny in the southeast but showers in the north and west. Max 34C (93F), min 7C (45F)

Around Britain

Key: b=bright, c=cloud, d=drizzle, pc=partly cloudy du=dull, f=fair, fg=fog, h=hail, m=mist, r=rain, sh=showers, sl=sleet, sn=snow, s=sun, t=thunder
*=previous day **=data not available

	Temp C midday yesterday		Rain mm 24 hrs to 5pm yesterday	Sun hr*
Aberdeen	24	R	0.0	0.8
Aberporth	27	S	0.0	12.6
Anglesey	25	S	0.0	12.0
Aviemore	25	S	0.0	3.9
Barnstaple	33	PC	0.0	**
Bedford	29	S	0.0	**
Belfast	24	PC	0.0	7.9
Birmingham	31	S	0.0	**
Bournemouth	30	S	0.0	13.8
Bridlington	23	S	0.0	**
Bristol	31	S	0.0	13.0
Camborne	27	S	0.0	13.6
Cardiff	29	S	0.0	10.8
Edinburgh	26	M	0.0	9.2
Eskdalemuir	22	R	0.0	9.0
Glasgow	22	C	0.0	9.9
Hereford	29	S	0.0	**
Herstmonceux	28	S	0.0	11.2
Ipswich	27	S	0.0	13.2
Isle of Man	20	PC	0.0	12.5
Isle of Wight	28	S	0.0	**
Jersey	33	S	0.0	13.6
Keswick	25	PC	0.0	**
Kinloss	**	**	0.0	2.9
Leeds	28	PC	0.0	**
Lerwick	15	M	0.0	8.9
Leuchars	27	R	0.0	8.0
Lincoln	28	S	0.0	13.0
Liverpool	27	C	0.0	**
London	30	S	0.0	12.5
Lyneham	31	S	0.0	13.5
Manchester	29	S	0.0	12.1
Margate	24	S	0.0	10.5
Milford Haven	28	S	0.0	**
Newcastle	26	S	0.0	**
Nottingham	29	S	0.0	12.0
Orkney	21	C	0.0	**
Oxford	31	S	0.0	**
Plymouth	31	S	0.0	**
Portland	24	PC	0.0	**
Scilly, St Mary's	23	PC	0.0	**
Shoreham	30	S	0.0	12.6
Shrewsbury	29	S	0.0	11.3
Snowdonia	27	S	0.0	**
Southend	23	S	0.0	11.5
South Uist	18	D	0.8	**
Stornoway	18	PC	0.0	2.6
Tiree	17	C	0.0	4.7
Whitehaven	23	R	0.0	12.5
Wick	**	S	0.0	**
Yeovilton	32	S	0.0	13.5

The world

All readings local midday yesterday

Alicante	36	S	Madeira	28	PC
Amsterdam	32	S	Madrid	35	S
Athens	31	PC	Malaga	31	S
Auckland	16	PC	Mallorca	36	S
Bahrain	39	S	Malta	34	PC
Bangkok	32	PC	Melbourne	13	C
Barbados	30	PC	Mexico City	25	PC
Barcelona	32	S	Miami	34	PC
Beijing	30	S	Milan	34	S
Beirut	**	**	Mombasa	29	PC
Belgrade	29	S	Montreal	25	PC
Berlin	26	S	Moscow	14	B
Bermuda	30	SH	Mumbai	27	M
Bordeaux	39	S	Munich	28	S
Brussels	34	S	Nairobi	25	S
Bucharest	24	PC	Naples	37	S
Budapest	28	S	New Orleans	**	**
Buenos Aires	11	DU	New York	29	B
Cairo	34	S	Nice	32	S
Calcutta	29	R	Nicosia	34	PC
Canberra	14	PC	Oslo	22	S
Cape Town	27	S	Paris	35	S
Chicago	27	B	Perth	18	PC
Copenhagen	19	PC	Prague	25	S
Corfu	39	PC	Reykjavik	14	C
Delhi	34	**	Riga	21	S
Dubai	45	S	Rio de Janeiro	22	B
Dublin	24	PC	Riyadh	44	S
Faro	28	S	Rome	35	S
Florence	38	S	San Francisco	23	PC
Frankfurt	33	S	Santiago	13	PC
Geneva	33	S	São Paulo	20	PC
Gibraltar	28	PC	Seoul	30	S
Helsinki	18	PC	Seychelles	28	B
Hong Kong	34	PC	Singapore	31	B
Honolulu	**	**	St Petersburg	18	B
Istanbul	30	B	Stockholm	23	S
Jerusalem	34	PC	Sydney	18	S
Johannesburg	11	S	Tel Aviv	34	PC
Kuala Lumpur	32	PC	Tenerife	30	PC
Kyiv	**	**	Tokyo	28	B
Lanzarote	30	PC	Vancouver	21	PC
Las Palmas	27	PC	Venice	32	S
Lima	22	DU	Vienna	27	S
Lisbon	29	PC	Warsaw	22	S
Los Angeles	24	PC	Washington	28	PC
Luxor	40	S	Zurich	31	S

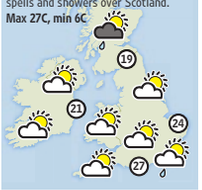
Five days ahead

Some cloudier days with showery rain in northern Britain but drier and warmer further south

Tomorrow

A few showers in southeastern England at first, otherwise it will be a dry and warm day with sunny spells in England, Wales and Ireland. Sunny spells and showers over Scotland.

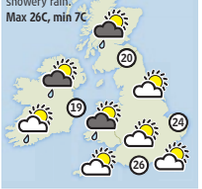
Max 27C, min 6C



Sunday

Dry with warm spells of sunshine over England and the south of Scotland. Cloud increasing across Ireland, Wales and northern Scotland to bring showery rain.

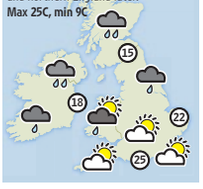
Max 26C, min 7C



Monday

Dry with sunny spells over central and southern England. An area of cloud and rain will spread eastwards across Ireland and Scotland, then into Wales and northern England later.

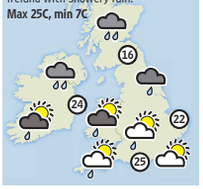
Max 25C, min 9C



Tuesday

Mainly dry with warm spells of sunshine in southern Britain and the south of Ireland. Rather cloudy over northern Britain and the north of Ireland with showery rain.

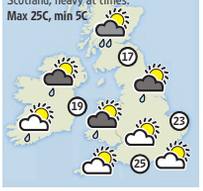
Max 25C, min 7C



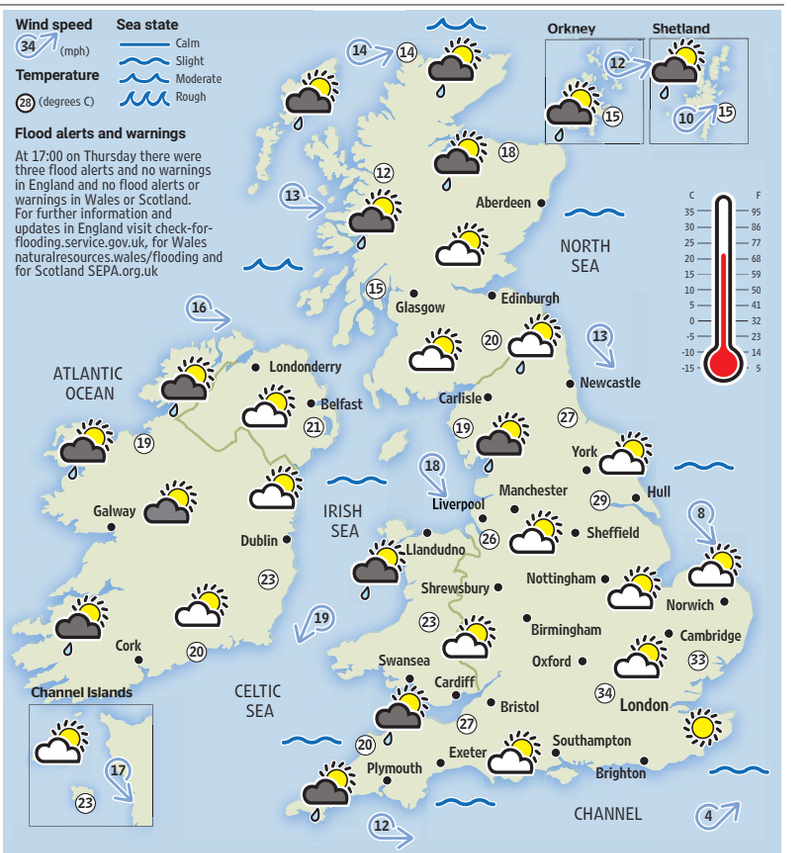
Wednesday

Mostly dry with sunny spells and only a few isolated showers over England, Wales and Ireland, mainly in the north and west. Scattered showers across Scotland, heavy at times.

Max 25C, min 5C



The Times weather page is provided by WeatherQuest

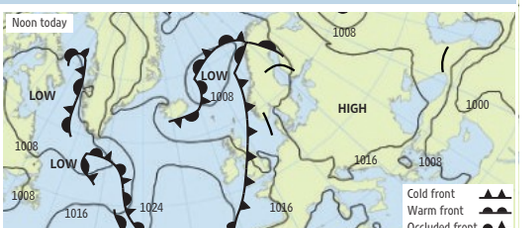


General situation: Mainly dry with plenty of hot spells of sunshine over England and Wales. Fresher with a few showers in Scotland and Ireland.
E Anglia, SE Eng, Channel Is, London: A dry and hot day with long spells of sunshine. Light and variable winds, perhaps moderate near the coast. Maximum 34C (93F), minimum 18C (64F).
SW Eng, NW Eng, Wales, Lake District, Borders: Some warm spells of sunshine but cloud will tend to increase to bring the risk of a few showers. Light to moderate northwesterly winds. Maximum 27C (81F), minimum 9C (48F).
Cen S Eng, E Eng, Cen N Eng, Midlands, NE Eng: Dry and sunny in the morning but cloud will increase to bring the risk of an isolated shower during the afternoon. Light to moderate north or northwesterly winds. Maximum 32C (90F), minimum 12C (54F).
Edinburgh and Dundee, Aberdeen: Rather cloudy with a few heavy showers at first, then turning dry with sunny spells. Light to moderate west or northwesterly winds. Maximum 21C (70F), minimum 10C (50F).
Republic of Ireland, N Ireland, IoM, SW Scotland, Cen Highland, Glasgow, Argyll, NW Scotland, Moray Firth, NE Scotland, N Isles: Some dry and sunny periods but areas of cloud will bring showers at times. Light to moderate west or northwesterly winds. Maximum 23C (73F), minimum 7C (45F).

Tides

Tidal predictions.
Heights in metres. All times in local time

Today		Ht		Ht
Aberdeen	02:55	4.5	15:32	4.3
Avonmouth	09:16	13.6	21:32	14.0
Belfast	--:--	--	13:09	3.3
Cardiff	09:06	12.5	21:22	12.9
Devonport	07:52	5.4	20:02	5.7
Dover	--:--	--	13:07	7.0
Dublin	01:00	3.5	13:38	3.1
Falmouth	07:16	5.1	19:29	5.5
Greenock	01:58	3.6	14:49	3.3
Harwich	01:24	4.2	13:41	4.2
Holyhead	--:--	--	12:19	5.6
Hull	08:00	7.9	20:41	7.6
Leith	04:12	5.9	16:41	5.7
Liverpool	--:--	--	13:10	9.5
London Bridge	03:40	7.3	16:01	7.1
Lowestoft	11:05	2.8	23:53	2.5
Milford Haven	08:10	7.2	20:28	7.5
Morecambe	--:--	--	13:20	9.6
Newhaven	--:--	--	13:16	6.9
Newquay	07:00	7.1	19:18	7.4
Oban	07:48	3.9	19:54	4.2
Penzance	06:32	5.5	18:51	5.8
Portsmouth	--:--	--	13:28	4.8
Shoreham	--:--	--	13:26	6.6
Southampton	00:20	4.6	12:55	4.6
Swansea	08:19	9.6	20:35	9.9
Tees	05:22	5.8	17:56	5.6
Weymouth	09:09	2.1	21:08	2.4



Synoptic situation

Low pressure centred to the east of Iceland will push a cold front slowly eastwards across England, Wales and Scotland, bringing thicker cloud and some cooler temperatures in northern and western areas with the chance of a few isolated showers. Hot and dry in southeastern England ahead of the cold front. Feeling fresher over the next few days.

Highs and lows

24hrs to 5pm yesterday

Warmest: Pershore, Worcestershire, 37.7C
Coldest: Writtle, 10.1C
Wettest: Myerscough, Lancashire, 11.0mm
Sunniest: Manston, 13.2hrs*

Sun and moon

For Greenwich
Sun rises: 05.44
Sun sets: 20.25
Moon rises: 07.52
Moon sets: 20.58
First quarter: August 20

Hours of darkness

Aberdeen	21:22-05:05
Belfast	21:28-05:30
Birmingham	21:05-05:20
Cardiff	21:07-05:28
Exeter	21:06-05:32
Glasgow	21:26-05:18
Liverpool	21:12-05:22
London	20:55-05:16
Manchester	21:10-05:18
Newcastle	21:12-05:11
Norwich	20:53-05:07
Penzance	21:13-05:41
Sheffield	21:06-05:16

Weather Eye

Paul Simons

If you are looking for rain in the weather forecast, it may be worth looking at what insects are up to.

The rain beetle lives up to its name, scampering around on the ground in a frenzy before rain arrives, but if the beetle takes to the air, flying and buzzing around in circles, it's a sign of fine weather on the way. And there may be good reason for the beetle's excitement before it rains because wet weather brings out the slugs that it feeds on.

Another weather forecasting insect is the ferocious-looking stag beetle, Britain's largest beetle that can reach 8cm (3in) long. The males are armed with fearsome-looking pincers, which they use to wrestle with other males to earn the right to mate with females.

Stag beetles are also known as thunder beetles because in folklore they were said to summon up thunder and lightning with their deep droning noise as they fly around. They are often seen on warm, sultry evenings before dusk, sometimes before storms erupt.

The mating habits of insects can also give a weather forecast. In a scientific study it was found that when atmospheric pressure drops, female cucurbit beetles and army worm moths do not "call" out to males for mating, but when the pressure rises the females signal to males they are interested in mating.

Aphids have been found to possess pressure sensors that detect even a slight fall in pressure, which triggers a mass reproduction of aphids that in 48 hours results in a population explosion of the pests before their predators — lacewings, ladybirds and others — can dive in for a feeding frenzy.

Ladybirds themselves also give weather forecasts. People in Powys in Wales used to hold a ladybird in the palm of their hands and if it simply fell to the ground then it was a sign of rain on the way, but if it flew up and away then fine weather was predicted, as a rhyme went: "Lady-bird, lady-bird, tell to me, what the weather is going to be; if fair, then fly in the air, if foul, then fall to the ground."

Speak directly to one of our forecasters on 09065 777675

8am to 5pm daily (calls are charged at £1.55 plus network extras)

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Sport

Newbury

Thunderer

3.00 We Ride At Dawn **4.45** Evenfall
3.35 Dontlookbackinanga **5.23** Angels Lane
4.10 Art Of Life (nb) **5.58** Lyra Lea

Going: good to firm
Draw: 5f-1m, low numbers best
Sky Sports Racing

3.00 Handicap (£5,757: 1m 2f) (5 runners)

1 (2) 34231 **RAINTOWN** 22 (P,CD) J S Moore 6-10-0 **K S McHugh (3)**
2 (3) 0-662 **GREY FOX** 25 (T,C,D) E Lavelle 9-10-0 **Taryn Langley**
3 (1) 6-043 **DECALOGUE** 8 (P) J Osborne 3-9-9 **C Whiteley**
4 (4) -0241 **WE RIDE AT DAWN** 22 (D) Robert Edwards 3-9-7 **H Vigors**
5 (5) 05-46 **LIVING IN HOPE** 36 (P) Harry Eustace 3-9-4 **T Ford (7)**

2-1 We Ride At Dawn, 3-1 Raintown, 100-30 Grey Fox, 4-1 Decalogue, 10-1 Living In Hope.

Thunderer's choice: We Ride At Dawn was a decisive winner at Sandown last month **Danger:** Raintown

3.35 Maiden Stakes (2-Y-O: £8,100: 1m) (7)

1 (3) **CAMELOT CASTLE** C Hills 9-7 **J Watson**
2 (1) 4 **DONTLOOKBACKINANGA** 42 R Hannon 9-7 **S M Levey**
3 (4) 4 **KING HIGH** 16 Owen Burrows 9-7 **C Rodriguez**
4 (7) **MULVANEY'S RETURN** B Meehan 9-7 **J Leavy**
5 (2) **QUICKEN AWAY** A Balding 9-7 **O Murphy**
6 (6) 0 **RUPERT THE BRAVE** 13 Oliver Cole 9-7 **T Marquand**
7 (5) **SOCKDOLAGER** R Varian 9-7 **R P Downey**

9-4 Dontlookbackinanga, 11-4 Quicken Away, 9-2 Sockdolager, 7-1 King High, 10-1 Camelot Castle, Mulvaney's Return, Rupert The Brave.

Thunderer's choice: Dontlookbackinanga is open to plenty of improvement **Danger:** Quicken Away

4.10 Novice Stakes (2-Y-O: £8,100: 7f) (5)

1 (3) 1 **AL SAMSAMA** 28 (C) R Hughes 9-9 **Doubtful**
2 (4) **ANGEL OF DESIRE** A Perrett 9-2 **P Dobbs**
3 (5) 62 **ART OF LIFE** 22 C Cox 9-2 **J Leavy**
4 (1) 3 **ISABELLA DE VEGA** 21 E Walker 9-2 **O Murphy**
5 (2) 3 **SWEETWONDERFULYOU** 21 W Haggas 9-2 **T Marquand**

11-10 Sweetwonderfulyou, 15-8 Art Of Life, 4-1 Isabella De Vega, 16-1 Angel Of Desire.

Thunderer's choice: Art Of Life was pegged back close home by an exciting prospect here last time **Danger:** Al Samsama

4.45 Conditions Stakes (2-Y-O: £21,600: 6f) (6)

1 (1) 41 **COAT OF RED** 16 (D) S & E Crisford 9-6 **C Rodriguez**
2 (5) 1 **EVENFALL** 22 G Boughey 9-6 **B Loughnane**
3 (6) 1 **FERRYSTREAM** 32 (D) J Chapple-Hyam 9-6 **O Murphy**
4 (3) 41 **SORRENGAIL** 21 (D) C Appleby 9-6 **W Buick**
5 (2) 41 **SPIRIT OF LYRA** 20 (D) W Knight 9-6 **T Marquand**
6 (4) 6 **NONREM** 103 B Meehan 9-2 **J Leavy**

2-1 Evenfall, 5-2 Sorrengail, 3-1 Spirit Of Lyra, 7-1 Coat Of Red, 8-1 Ferrystream, 66-1 Nonrem.

Thunderer's choice: Evenfall was odds-on for her debut at Yarmouth and did not disappoint **Danger:** Sorrengail

5.23 Stakes (Fillies' Listed) (2-Y-O: £28,355: 5f) (13)

1 (4) 1062 **ACCLAMATION STAR** 13 James Owen 9-2 **L Edmunds**
2 (10) 31 **ACTING LADY** 35 C Appleby 9-2 **W Buick**
3 (2) 12 **ANGELS LANE** 27 (D) H Candy 9-2 **N Currie**
4 (12) 14 **BLUE FLIGHT** 21 J Fanshawe 9-2 **D Muscutt**
5 (3) 4U2 **COSMIC MYSTERY** 41 (BF) A Watson 9-2 **C Rodriguez**
6 (13) 23013 **DUBAI CHARM** 9 (D) R Hughes 9-2 **P Dobbs**
7 (1) 1 **EFSIXTEEN** 103 (T,D) G Scott 9-2 **T Marquand**
8 (8) 201 **ELEVATING** 8 (D) R Hannon 9-2 **S M Levey**
9 (9) 32012 **FAST TRACK** 16 (T,D) A Balding 9-2 **O Murphy**
10 (5) 510 **HAVANA LIGHTNING** 58 (T,D) G Boughey 9-2 **B Loughnane**
11 (6) 1130 **LOVER GIRL** 58 (D) K P De Foy 9-2 **S James**
12 (11) 251 **SEXY CHICK** 14 R Spencer 9-2 **G Wood**
13 (7) 132 **WATEERA** 4 (BF,D) K R Burke 9-2 **C Lee**

4-1 Acting Lady, 5-1 Fast Track, 6-1 Efsixteen, 8-1 Acclamation Star, 10-1 Angels Lane, Sexy Chick, Elevating, 12-1 Wateera.

Thunderer's choice: Angels Lane was touched off in the Super Sprint over course and distance last month **Danger:** Elevating

5.58 Handicap (£7,328: 7f) (8)

1 (1) 41032 **ZATSGOOD** 20 (P,T,BF) G Boughey 4-10-2 **B Loughnane**
2 (3) -3004 **WALSON'S LAW** 21 (CD) E J-Houghton 5-10-0 **C Hutchinson**
3 (7) -6553 **STRATOCRACY** 21 (CD) K Frost 5-9-11 **J Leavy**
4 (2) 266-1 **SCUTARI** 218 K R Burke 3-9-10 **C Lee**
5 (5) 31500 **ASSARANCA** 35 (D) R Hannon 3-9-8 **S M Levey**
6 (8) 3-034 **LIGHTNING POLKA** 27 (H,BF) E Walker 3-9-6 **T Marquand**
7 (6) -4221 **LYRA LEA** 21 (D) B Millman 3-9-6 **O Murphy**
8 (4) 523-5 **MEDIA LEGEND** 90 Harry Charlton 3-9-4 **L Edmunds**

3-1 Zatsgood, 4-1 Lyra Lea, 9-2 Scutari, 5-1 Stratocracy, 7-1 Walson's Law, 8-1 Media Legend, 10-1 Lightning Polka, 20-1 Assaranca.

Thunderer's choice: Lyra Lea was suited by dropping back to 7f when scoring at Sandown **Danger:** Scutari

Yarmouth

Thunderer

2.03 Matins **3.48** Nicely Curved
2.38 Rock Montreal **4.25** Cameley Days
3.13 Divot **5.00** Mister Sandman

Going: good to firm
Draw: no advantage **Sky Sports Racing**

2.03 Novice Stakes (£5,400: 1m) (2)

1 (1) 1 **MATINS** 20 (T,D) W Haggas 3-9-11 **C Fallon**
2 (2) **EMPEROR AURELIUS** Mrs I G-Leveque 3-9-4 **B Sayette**

1-80 Matins, 16-1 Emperor Aurelius.

2.38 Novice Stakes (2-Y-O: £7,020: 7f) (7)

1 (3) **DEL PEARO** J Ryan 9-7 **S De Sousa**
2 (4) **JUNIOR AGAIN** G Boughey 9-7 **J P Spencer**
3 (7) 5 **MAJESTIC JUDE** 17 W Haggas 9-7 **Doubtful**
4 (6) 65 **MINO** 22 M Botti 9-7 **B Sayette**
5 (2) 6 **ON TARGET** 22 G Scott 9-7 **D Keenan**
6 (1) **ROCK MONTREAL** R Varian 9-7 **R Dawson**
7 (5) 4 **STORMY WINTER** 10 S bin Suroor 9-7 **J Mitchell**

6-4 Rock Montreal, 9-4 Junior Again, 13-2 On Target, 8-1 Stormy Winter, 10-1 Del Pearo, Mino.

3.13 Handicap (£4,397: 1m 3f 104yd) (4)

1 (1) 35325 **ARCTURUS FLAME** 28 (P,T) James Owen 4-9-9 **C Fallon**
2 (3) 4/64 **ZACHARY HICKES** 45 R Varian 4-9-8 **R Dawson**
3 (4) -0020 **GOOD ONYA MATE** J35 M Bell 4-9-1 **S De Sousa**
4 (2) 35011 **DIVOT** 17 (C) W Knight 4-8-13 **J P Spencer**

Evens Divot, 3-1 Arcturus Flame, 7-2 Zachary Hickes, 7-1 Good Onya Mate.

3.48 Classified Stakes (£3,454: 1m) (10)

1 (5) 30431 **LETSBEATSEPSIS** 11 (P) G & J Moore 4-10-0 **J Fernandes**
2 (9) -6252 **HEER'S SADIE** 17 (CD) J & S Birkett 8-9-9 **C Howarth (3)**
3 (7) 04400 **KEEPER OF SECRETS** 32 (P) I Williams 5-9-9 **F Bughanaim**
4 (8) 20333 **NICELY CURVED** 12 (T) Hayley Burton 6-9-9 **S D Bowen**
5 (4) -0404 **OH SO AUDACIOUS** 12 (P,D) Jack Jones 7-9-9 **J Mitchell**
6 (6) -0000 **CASTLEKEELY** 70 James Owen 3-9-2 **C Fallon**
7 (1) 05-0 **DEE'S HONEY** 155 Michael Keady 3-9-2 **D Keenan**
8 (10) 06-40 **EL CARRUSEL** 17 J Ryan 3-9-2 **S Donohoe**
9 (3) 00000 **LORDSBRIDGE BAY** 22 (B) S Woods 3-9-2 **S De Sousa**
10 (2) 44355 **POETIC GRACE** 31 (B) C Allen 3-9-2 **P Bradley**

9-4 Letsbeatsepsis, 3-1 Nicely Curved, 11-2 Castlekeely, 6-1 Heer's Sadie, 10-1 Oh So Audacious, 12-1 Poetic Grace, 14-1 El Carrusel, 16-1 Lordsbridge Bay.

4.25 Handicap (£4,397: 5f) (8)

1 (5) 60424 **LAZZAR** 20 C Wallis 4-9-9 **C Howarth (3)**
2 (8) 21003 **CREATIVE QUEEN** 11 (B,C) W Haggas 3-9-9 **C Fallon**
3 (6) 0-420 **LONDON IS BLUE** 18 (P,D) R Cowell 3-9-9 **Doubtful**
4 (3) 11414 **ZOUSTAR DREAMS** 11 (P,D) E Dunlop 3-9-8 **J P Spencer**
5 (1) 12430 **CAMELEY DAYS** 20 (P,C,D) C Dwyer 4-9-6 **S De Sousa**
6 (2) 03141 **RUMBLE RUBY** 2 (D) Lemos Souza 3-9-12(6ex) **L Wright (5)**
7 (7) 53314 **ALWAYS PERFECT** 22 (T,BF,C) C Fellowes 3-9-4 **P Bradley**
8 (4) 04112 **SUNLIT SEA** 6 (B,BF,D) Sir M Prescott 3-9-3 **Doubtful**

3-1 Creative Queen, 7-2 Rumble Ruby, Always Perfect, Zoustar Dreams, 8-1 Lazzar, Cameley Days.

5.00 Classified Stakes (£3,454: 6f) (9)

1 (6) 40026 **BULLINGTON BRY** 19 (B) Jessica Macey 4-9-9 **R Dawson**
2 (8) 34-42 **MISTER SANDMAN** 66 (H,BF) G & J Moore 4-9-9 **J Fernandes (7)**
3 (4) 06053 **MY MATE BEATTIE** 17 (P) S Dixon 4-9-9 **C Howarth (3)**
4 (9) 0-505 **PAYFORANOTHER DAAY** 14 (B) S Hodgson 6-9-9 **D Keenan**
5 (7) 0-006 **THANKS DAD** 48 (T,V,D) S Dixon 6-9-9 **M Mortensen (5)**
6 (1) -0031 **VALADERO** 8 (B) Brian Toomey 5-9-9 **L Wright (5)**
7 (5) 04003 **MAYFLOWER ROCK** 9 D Cunha 3-9-5 **S Donohoe**
8 (3) 32242 **MY MATE MACKLEY** 5 (P) Adam Kirby 3-9-5 **O Carmichael (7)**
9 (2) 004 **RED LEGS** 23 Martin Dunne 3-9-5 **S De Sousa**

5-2 Mister Sandman, 4-1 My Mate Mackley, 13-2 Valadero, My Mate Beattie, 7-1 Mayflower Rock, 15-2 Bullington Bry, 12-1 Thanks Dad, 14-1 others.

Epsom

Thunderer

2.48 Greek Symphony **4.38** Mrembo
3.23 Tiora Time **5.13** Trio
4.00 Modern Times **5.48** Ice Cube

Going: good to firm
Draw: 1m-2f, low numbers best **Racing TV**

2.48 Nursery (2-Y-O: £4,449: 7f) (5)

1 (3) 4210 **WISE AND WONDERFUL** 15 (CD) A Balding 9-9 **D Probert**
2 (2) 34 **BINCIMBAL** 34 Harry Charlton 9-8 **H Crouch**
3 (4) 3213 **GREEK SYMPHONY** 5 (D) Oliver Cole 9-7 **Ashley Lewis (3)**
4 (5) 420 **MINSTER BOY** 27 E J-Houghton 9-6 **C Bishop**
5 (1) 43 **SEQUEL STAR** 28 E Walker 9-4 **K Shoemark**

5-2 Greek Symphony, 11-4 Wise And Wonderful, 3-1 Minster Boy, 4-1 Sequel Star, 8-1 Bincimbal.

3.23 Novice Stakes (2-Y-O: £7,020: 7f) (5)

1 (4) 31 **TIORA TIME** 13 (D) Tom Clover 9-6 **C Bishop**
2 (5) 00 **DESERT SYMPHONY** 22 J Boyle 9-2 **P Cosgrave**
3 (2) 45 **DIPLOMATA** 21 W Haggas 9-2 **D Probert**
4 (3) 05 **SECRET FLITE** 15 T Ward 9-2 **Ashley Lewis (3)**
5 (1) 60 **TANSY LANE** 35 James Owen 9-2 **K Shoemark**

10-11 Tiora Time, 2-1 Tansy Lane, 7-1 Secret Flite, 10-1 Diplomata, 25-1 Desert Symphony.

4.00 Handicap (£6,019: 6f) (8)

1 (2) 04640 **RUBY'S PROFIT** 62 (T) T Ward 4-10-2 **K Shoemark**
2 (5) -1160 **SIR GARFIELD** 16 (B,CD) J & S Quinn 5-9-13 **J Hart**
3 (1) 1-403 **ANGEL GABRIEL** 9 (BF,D) R Beckett 3-9-10 **H Crouch**
4 (6) 20040 **KOLKATA KNIGHT** 15 (T,D) T Dascombe 3-9-10 **W Cox**
5 (4) 10-13 **ON EDGE** 52 (V,D) C Mason 8-9-9 **G Mangan**
6 (8) -1300 **STELLAR VISION** 83 (T) S C Williams 3-9-8 **P Cosgrave**
7 (3) 35631 **MODERN TIMES** 18 (P,T,D) James Owen 5-9-7 **D Probert**
8 (7) 25033 **SANDSCREENDELIVERD** 20 P Crate 4-9-3 **C Bishop**

2-1 Modern Times, 5-1 On Edge, 11-2 Ruby's Profit, 6-1 Sandscreendeliverd, Sir Garfield, 7-1 Angel Gabriel, 14-1 Kolkata Knight, 25-1 Stellar Vision.

4.38 Handicap (£3,664: 1m 2f) (11)

1 (4) 41454 **MREMBO** 21 (P,D) J Portman 7-9-12 **H Crouch**
2 (2) 0-0B3 **GRETNA DREAMS** 22 (D) S C Williams 4-9-11 **P Cosgrave**
3 (3) 05621 **OFFIAH'S BOY** 10 (D) J Tickle 5-9-11(5ex) **Taylor Fisher**
4 (10) 15521 **HAVEAGOBEAU** 20 (D) J Boyle 7-9-8 **Olivia Haines (7)**
5 (6) -0252 **CELTIC SPIRIT** 20 (P) K Jewell 4-9-7 **D Probert**
6 (9) 02255 **PANGBOURNE** 95 R Teal 3-9-3 **Ashley Lewis (3)**
7 (5) 15323 **TIME TO SPARKLE** 18 (BF) J Keane 3-9-3 **non-runner**
8 (1) -0543 **ALL ABOUT GEORGE** 14 Kieran Burke 4-9-0 **Josephine Gordon**
9 (11) 0-006 **LADY MARGRET** 21 A Carroll 4-9-0 **W Carson**
10 (7) 63003 **PRIVATE PROJECT** 13 P Phelan 3-8-8 **J F Egan**
11 (8) 40554 **CORMORANT ROCK** 13 (P) J Boyle 3-8-5 **T Heard**

7-4 Offiah's Boy, 11-2 Time To Sparkle, 6-1 Haveagobeau, 7-1 Celtic Spirit, 15-2 Mrembo, 10-1 All About George, 12-1 Gretna Dreams, 20-1 others.

5.13 Handicap (3-Y-O: £6,019: 1m 113yd) (4)

1 (2) 1-122 **CHANTELLE** 15 (BF) Sir M Prescott 9-8 **J Gilligan**
2 (4) 63340 **LOBLOLLY** 15 (P) S Woods 9-6 **D Probert**
3 (1) 35011 **TRIO** 15 (CD) E J-Houghton 9-6 **C Bishop**
4 (3) 0-650 **MYSTIC MOMENT** 44 (C) N Mulholland 9-4 **Ashley Lewis**

Evens Trio, 11-8 Chantelle, 7-1 Loblolly, 25-1 Mystic Moment.

5.48 Handicap (£4,449: 7f) (9)

1 (6) 656/ **A LA NOCHE** 1059 Oliver Cole 5-10-2 **P Cosgrave**
2 (5) 36604 **RED MIRAGE** 22 (B,D) J & S Quinn 8-10-1 **J Hart**
3 (4) 31530 **KING OF WAR** 21 (P,T,D) M Wigham 7-10-1 **J F Egan**
4 (2) -6054 **FREDDIE'S STAR** 31 (B,D) R Teal 4-10-0 **Ashley Lewis (3)**
5 (1) 43005 **ARARAT** 11 (D) R Cook & J Bridger 6-9-13 **D Probert**
6 (7) 44150 **PLAY ME** 9 (C) J Boyle 4-9-12 **D J Murphy (7)**
7 (8) 55541 **EYES FRONT** 15 (B,CD) E Smyth-Osbourne 3-9-8 **A Rawlinson**
8 (3) 05135 **SPACEWOMAN** 20 (P) H Candy 3-9-5 **H Crouch**
9 (9) 56561 **ICE CUBE** 29 (H,CD) R Spencer 3-9-4 **C Bishop**

15-8 Ice Cube, 11-4 Eyes Front, 6-1 King Of War, 13-2 Spacewoman, 10-1 Red Mirage, 12-1 Freddie's Star, 16-1 Play Me, 25-1 Ararat, A La Noche.

Newmarket

Thunderer

5.18 Sontsivka **7.02** Northcliff
5.53 Gilding The Lily **7.37** Hickory
6.27 The Sweet Escape **8.10 Free World** (nap)

Going: good to firm
Draw: no advantage **Racing TV**

5.18 Novice Stakes (2-Y-O: £5,669: 7f) (12)

1 (8) **ADMIRAL LEACH** E Dunlop 9-7 **H Davies**
2 (11) **MR TWIG** M Bell 9-7 **C Shepherd**
3 (5) **REBORN** A Balding 9-7 **R Hornby**
4 (3) **ROYAL INSTINCT** M Botti 9-7 **M Ghiani**
5 (12) **SMASH ROYALE** E Lavelle 9-7 **J Doughty**
6 (10) **SONTSIVKA** H Palmer 9-7 **C Planas**
7 (9) 6 **TURTLE BEACH** 62 J & S Birkett 9-7 **D E Hogan**
8 (1) 03 **COOL KING** 15 M Botti 9-4 **T Moore (7)**
9 (7) **PRESSURED** E Dunlop 9-4 **R Havlin**
10 (6) **SAVINGPRIVATEPARRY** P Chapple-Hyam 9-4 **Kaiya Fraser**
11 (4) **MOUNT ST** G Boughey 8-13 **Grace McEntee**
12 (2) 5 **NECROMANCER** 27 R Beckett 8-10 **E Greatrex**

9-4 Necromancer, 4-1 Reborn, 13-2 Mount St, 8-1 Royal Instinct, 12-1 Sontsivka, Cool King, 14-1 Admiral Leach, Mr Twig.

5.53 Novice Stakes (£5,757: 1m) (3)

1 (1) 21- **DATE LINE** 420 (C) C Johnston 3-9-9 **C Shepherd**
2 (3) **EVENING CALL** W Haggas 3-9-2 **H Davies**
3 (2) 2 **GILDING THE LILY** 14 J & T Gosden 3-9-2 **R Havlin**

11-10 Gilding The Lily, 9-4 Date Line, 5-2 Evening Call.

6.27 Handicap (£5,154: 1m) (8)

1 (3) 10452 **RISING FORCE** 14 (D) J Butler 5-9-9 **M Ghiani**
2 (8) -1505 **MR UBIQUITOUS** 22 (D) Harry Eustace 4-9-8 **Kaiya Fraser**
3 (6) 30-54 **SIR EDWARD LEAR** 78 (V,BF,C) James Owen 5-9-7 **M Paetel (5)**
4 (5) 00304 **CALYXOH** 12 (V) P Morris 4-9-7 **D E Hogan**
5 (2) 46112 **THE SWEET ESCAPE** 13 (T,D) D Loughnane 4-9-5 **Laura Pearson**
6 (1) 60004 **SPECIAL GHAIYYATH** 16 (D) P Charalambous & J Clutterbuck 4-9-2 **Rose Dawes (5)**
7 (4) 3-046 **CURRUMBIN** 14 (H) Michael Keady 5-8-11 **H Davies**
8 (7) 0-600 **TRIGGERMAN** 22 (V,D) P Morris 5-8-9 **F Bassett (7)**

13-8 The Sweet Escape, 7-4 Rising Force, 5-1 Sir Edward Lear, 10-1 Special Ghaiyyath, 14-1 Currumbin, 20-1 Mr Ubiquitous, 33-1 Calyxoh, 50-1 Triggerman.

7.02 Handicap (£5,154: 6f) (12)

1 (2) 00501 **FIFTY NIFTY** 7 (E,CD) Martin Dunne 5-10-5(5ex) **C Shepherd**
2 (11) 14356 **MUMAYAZ** 22 (D) A Carroll 7-10-0 **J Doughty**
3 (1) 50U32 **ZIGGY'S CONDOR** 8 (BF,D) Adam Kirby 5-10-0 **S Farmer (5)**
4 (6) -2120 **SPIRIT OF JENNY** 8 (D) Steph Hollinshead 4-9-12 **D Costello**
5 (4) 14602 **NORTHCLIFF** 13 (V,BF,D) R Burdon 6-9-11 **Kaiya Fraser**
6 (12) 11600 **BEAUZON** 20 (D) I Williams 7-9-11 **R Kavanagh (3)**
7 (10) 03003 **REBEL PATH** 14 (P,D) S C Williams 7-9-8 **C R Lyons (7)**
8 (7) 6-005 **ROMANTIC TWILIGHT** 23 (D) W Stone 3-9-8 **E Greatrex**
9 (3) 0-064 **CURRAHEE** 14 (P,T) S C Williams 4-9-6 **M Ghiani**
10 (9) 22120 **BAYRAAT** 20 (D) T Tate 10-9-1 **R Hornby**
11 (5) 24261 **MOLLY MAC** 15 (D) M Fenton (Ire) 3-9-0 **Grace McEntee**
12 (8) 10000 **EM JAY KAY** 31 (P,D) P McEntee 7-8-13 **C Planas**

3-1 Molly Mac, 5-1 Fifty Nifty, 11-2 Northcliff, 6-1 Rebel Path, Ziggy's Condor, 10-1 Currahee, 12-1 Spirit Of Jenny, Mumayaz.

7.37 Handicap (£10,308: 1m) (10)

1 (7) 66020 **STORM STAR** 57 (D) A Balding 5-10-2 **A Redman (7)**
2 (5) 06061 **HICKORY** 20 (P,D) J Osborne 8-10-2 **W Carver**
3 (3) -0055 **TUSCAN HILLS** 13 (D) N Tinkler 4-10-0 **R Hornby**
4 (10) -4405 **GOD OF WAR** 100 Tom Clover 4-9-12 **M Ghiani**
5 (4) 10030 **STERLING KNIGHT** 13 (CD) E Dunlop 7-9-11 **T Moore (7)**
6 (1) 5-015 **PRINCIPALITY** 70 (D) Harry Eustace 4-9-10 **Kaiya Fraser**
7 (8) 11250 **ZARATHOS** 16 (D) D Cunha 4-9-9 **C Shepherd**
8 (6) /0003 **CROUPIER** 13 (D) J Parkinson & S Smith 7-9-9 **R Havlin**
9 (9) 01241 **BROCKLESBY BILL** 16 (H,D) Kathy Turner 3-8-13 **C Tucker (7)**
10 (2) 00034 **MYTHICAL GUEST** 27 G Margarson 6-8-13 **M Paetel (5)**

7-2 Hickory, 5-1 Brocklesby Bill, 6-1 Principality, 8-1 Tuscan Hills, God Of War, Croupier, 10-1 Storm Star, Mythical Guest.

8.10 Handicap (£5,234: 2m) (7)

1 (3) 31110 **ROGUE EMPIRE** 21 (D) R Teal 4-9-12 **O Lewis (5)**
2 (7) 45310 **TARBAT NESS** 21 (B,D) J Berry 7-9-12 **L Catton**
3 (4) 1-222 **AN BRADAN FEASA** 13 (D) Jack Jones 6-9-12 **J Dickson (5)**
4 (2) 31256 **MIO AMICO** 94 Michael Keady 4-9-7 **A Redman (7)**
5 (6) 12243 **LARAVIE** 13 (V,D) James Owen 7-9-7 **M Paetel**
6 (5) -0041 **FREE WORLD** 10 (D) I Williams 5-9-4(5ex) **R Kavanagh**
7 (1) 65121 **THE CRAFTYMASTER** 23 (T,D) A Carroll 6-8-10 **Myla Coppins (5)**

11-8 Free World, 4-1 The Craftymaster, 6-1 An Bradan Feasa, 13-2 Rogue Empire, 10-1 Laravie, 12-1 Tarbat Ness, Mio Amico.

Thirsk

Thunderer

5.33 Final Objective **7.18** Raging Raj
6.08 National Honour **7.50** Mount King
6.43 Managing Director **8.20** Halimede

Going: good-good to firm in places
Draw: 5f, high numbers best **Racing TV**

5.33 Maiden Stakes (2-Y-O: £5,757: 6f) (11)

1 (5) 0 **BLUE FAITH** 42 M Appleby 9-7 **T Eaves**
2 (9) 204 **FINAL OBJECTIVE** 17 (BF) H Al Jehani (UAE) 9-7 **J Doyle**
3 (8) **FIVE STAR GEORGE** J Camacho 9-7 **T Kiely-Marshall (5)**
4 (11) **HOPE OF ACKLAM** M & D Easterby 9-7 **Joanna Mason**
5 (6) **KNIGHTBOLT** K Ryan 9-7 **S Gray**
6 (7) **LES INVINCIBLES** C Kellett 9-7 **M Winn**
7 (4) **MELODY MAN** J & S Quinn 9-7 **JP Sullivan**
8 (2) **PIVOTAL STAR** M & D Easterby 9-7 **B Garritty**
9 (3) 4 **ROYAL STRIKE** 14 K R Burke 9-7 **P-L Jamin**
10 (1) **SCENIC ROUTE** R & P Fahey 9-7 **Oisin Orr**
11 (10) **NOVAH** N Tinkler 9-2 **F McManoman**

10-11 Final Objective, 7-2 Knightbolt, 8-1 Scenic Route, 10-1 Royal Strike, 16-1 Melody Man, 25-1 others.

6.08 Novice Stakes (2-Y-O: £6,804: 7f) (6)

1 (3) 3 **BREAKING THE HABIT** 10 T Easterby 9-7 **D Allan**
2 (5) 0 **GOLD KEY** 20 K Ryan 9-7 **T Eaves**
3 (4) 2 **NATIONAL HONOUR** 14 (BF) C Appleby 9-7 **J Doyle**
4 (2) 2 **VARZI** 93 (T,BF) K R Burke 9-7 **P-L Jamin**
5 (6) **WORK LIKE HELL** J Tate 9-7 **D Tudhope**
6 (1) **MECCAPULCO** M Dods 9-2 **S B Kirrane**

6-5 Varzi, 9-4 National Honour, 11-2 Work Like Hell, 10-1 Gold Key, 12-1 Meccapulco, 25-1 Breaking The Habit.

6.43 Handicap (£5,234: 5f) (9)

1 (9) 32521 **MOULIN BOOJ** 3 (CD) G Scott 6-10-1(5ex) **D Tudhope**
2 (7) 53051 **ACCRUAL** 13 (CD) R Carr 5-9-8 **W Pyle**
3 (3) 31236 **EMERALD HARMONY** 20 (CD) P Midgley 5-9-7 **D Nolan**
4 (5) 61410 **WINCHURCH** 16 (D) M Appleby 4-9-7 **T Eaves**
5 (1) 31214 **ROCK OF ENGLAND** 13 (C,D) P Midgley 6-9-5 **L Morris**
6 (8) 36021 **EQUITY LAW** 54 (P,CD) T Easterby 5-9-4 **D Allan**
7 (6) 45110 **HOVER ON THE WIND** 28 (D) P Midgley 6-9-4 **P Mulrennan**
8 (2) 10/53 **MANAGING DIRECTOR** 20 (CD) G Oldroyd 4-9-2 **P J McDonald**
9 (4) 63001 **OUR ABSENT FRIENDS** 30 (D) T Davidson 8-8-12 **S Gray**

7-2 Moulin Booj, 9-2 Winchurch, 11-2 Equity Law, 13-2 Accrual, 15-2 Rock Of England, Managing Director, 10-1 others.

7.18 Handicap (3-Y-O: £5,234: 7f) (8)

1 (8) 1-6 **ENCHANT** 61 K R Burke 9-10 **J Doyle**
2 (5) -0214 **RETURN OF THE GODS** 20 (BF,D) E Bethell 9-8 **D Tudhope**
3 (2) 16300 **ZARVALI** 7 (D) Roger Fell 9-7 **O Orr**
4 (1) -4103 **SUBSTANCE** 70 (T) M Walford 9-5 **J Garritty**
5 (7) 06315 **RAGING RAJ** 20 (D) M Herrington 9-4 **T Eaves**
6 (6) -2402 **SHADOW RUN** 13 (P) S Dixon 9-1 **L Morris**
7 (4) 322 **DERRYGARRAN LAD** 26 (P) J Camacho 9-0 **R Sexton**
8 (3) 25331 **INDEFENSIBLE** 26 (D) O Pears 9-0 **H Russell**

100-30 Derrygarran Lad, 9-2 Shadow Run, Indefensible, 11-2 Enchant, 6-1 Return Of The Gods, 15-2 Substance, Raging Raj, 20-1 Zarvali.

7.50 Handicap (£3,926: 1m) (15)

1 (3) 21130 **ROARING RALPH** 21 (B,D) M Dods 6-9-9 **S B Kirrane**
2 (5) 125-0 **STYLE OF LIFE** 91 (T,CD) H Bethell 6-9-9 **P J McDonald**
3 (10) 1-005 **BLOODSWEATANDTYRES** 18 (P) B Ellison 4-9-8 **B Robinson**
4 (15) 13222 **MILITARY LEADER** 6 (B,BF,CD) Phillip Makin 5-9-7 **P Mulrennan**
5 (9) 10602 **ALESSIA FERNANDA** 9 (T,D) D Carroll 6-9-6 **Z Wheatley**
6 (1) 45244 **HARSWELL RUBY** 16 (BF,CD) Roger Fell 4-9-6 **Joanna Mason**
7 (14) 41444 **DONNA NOOK** 25 (T,V,D) D O'Meara 4-9-5 **D Tudhope**
8 (12) -0535 **GREEN PURSUIT** 61 (P,T) S Spencer 4-9-5 **D Swift**
9 (2) 23515 **JESMOND DAWN** 27 (D) G Tuer 5-9-4 **O Stammers**
10 (4) 36120 **UP THE JAZZ** 20 (D) R & P Fahey 5-9-3 **E Tindall (5)**
11 (6) 50053 **DEGALE** 15 (D) D & N Barron 5-9-1 **O Orr**
12 (7) 06512 **MOUNT KING** 19 (B,T,BF,CD) T Easterby 6-8-13 **D Allan**
13 (8) 01333 **TRAVIS** 14 (P,C) G Harker 5-8-10 **W Pyle**
14 (11) 05120 **PALMARIAN** 22 (H,BF,D) R Carr 4-8-9 **JP Sullivan**
15 (13) 1-002 **MISS WILLOWS** 59 S Whitaker 7-8-6 **L Morris**

4-1 Military Leader, 13-2 Mount King, 8-1 Jesmond Dawn, 10-1 Roaring Ralph, Travis, Up The Jazz, 12-1 Style Of Life, Alessia Fernanda, Bloodsweatandtyres.

8.20 Handicap (£3,140: 1m 4f) (3)

1 (1) -4500 **PRINCE ACHILLE** 148 J O'Keeffe 7-9-10 **J Garritty**
2 (3) 00011 **HALIMEDE** 6 (D) Sir M Prescott 3-9-9(12ex) **L Morris**
3 (2) 52512 **RECOBELLA** 4 P Kirby 5-9-4 **T Kiely-Marshall (5)**

2-9 Halimede, 4-1 Recobella, 20-1 Prince Achille.

Results

Athletics

European Championships

Alexander Stadium, Birmingham: Finals: Leadng positions: Men: 800m 1, M English (Ire) 1min 45.26sec; 2, M Bloudek (Cro) 1:45.62; 3, M Attaoui (Sp) 1:45.71. **Discus** 1, K Ceh (Slove) 72.51m; 2, M Alekna (Lith) 69.89; 3, H Janssen (Ger) 69.53. **Decathlon** 1, L Neugebauer (Ger) 8,611pts; 2, N Kaul (Ger) 8,573; 3, S Skotheim (Nor) 8,433. **Women: 200m** 1, A Hunt (GB) 22.19; 2, r Adeleke (Ire) 22.28; 3, D Asher-Smith (GB) 22.29. **3,000m steeplechase** 1, G-F Krause (Ger) 9:12.69; 2, A Finot (Fr) 9:14.24; 3, O Guerth (Ger) 9:15.33. **Triple jump** 1, 1 D Derkach (It) 14.60m; 2, S Guisse (Bel) 14.46; 3, A Nacheva (Bul) 14.40.

	G	S	B	Total
1, Great Britain	4	3	1	**8**
2, Italy	3	2	1	**6**
3, Germany	2	3	4	**9**
4, Netherlands	2	1	2	**5**
5, Norway	2	0	2	**4**
6=, Ireland	1	1	0	**2**
6=, Switzerland	1	1	0	**2**

Football

Europa League
Third qualifying round, second legs

Hearts (0) **1** **Benfica** (0) **1**
Magnusson 77 Lukébakio 78
(Benfica win 7-2 on agg)

Rangers (1) **1** **J Bialystok** (0) **1**
Shankland 19 (pen) Prelec 65
(Jagiellonia Białystok win 3-2 on agg)

Conference League
Third qualifying round, second legs

Motherwell (0) **2** **HJK** (0) **0**
Said 47, 60 8,185
(Motherwell win 3-1 on agg)

Shkendija (0) **0** **Hibernian** (0) **0**

(Hibernian win 2-1 on agg)

Golf

DP World Tour Danish Championship

Funen: Leading first-round scores (Great Britain and Ireland unless stated): **65** F Mory (Fr). **66** L Bjerregaard (Den), B Stone (SA). **67** F Laporta (It), F Celli (It), Wenyi Ding (China), F Schott (Ger), O Lindell (Fin). **68** B Watson (US), J Dean, J Buchanan (Aus), D Frittelli (SA), M Jordan, D Horsey, B Wiesberger (Austria), M Mjaaseth (Nor). **69** R Williams (SA), E Ferguson, Zhou Yanhan (China), J Perico (Per), R Gouveia (Por), A Rozner (Fr), T Olesen (Den), D Bradbury, J Guerrier (Fr), J Yule, T Clements, C Surratt (US), A Ayora (Sp), D Law, R Langasque (Fr), M Leth Simonsen (Den), J Berry.

VP Bank Swiss Women's Open

Rotkreuz: Leading first-round scores (Great Britain and Ireland unless stated): **64** K Arwefjaell (Swe). **65** L Sobron (Sp), A Latorre (Sp). **66** C Williams, A Uehara (Japan), B Fernández (Sp), A Försterling (Ger), W Hillier (Aus).

Rugby league

Betfred Super League Hull KR 28 Catalans Dragons 10; Leeds 16 Leigh 20; Warrington 30 York 10.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Leeds	23	18	0	5	784	346	**36**
Wigan	22	17	0	5	655	401	**34**
Warrington	22	16	0	6	598	360	**32**
Wakefield	22	16	0	6	609	376	**32**
Hull KR	22	15	0	7	660	349	**30**
Leigh	23	15	0	8	508	428	**30**
St Helens	22	12	0	10	502	492	**24**
Catalans D	23	9	0	14	449	689	**18**
Toulouse	22	7	0	15	450	592	**14**
York	23	7	0	16	454	665	**14**
Castleford	22	7	0	15	390	702	**14**
Hull	22	6	0	16	385	481	**12**
Bradford	22	6	0	16	386	671	**12**
Huddersfld	22	5	0	17	375	651	**10**

Snooker

China Open

Taiyuan City: Second round (England unless stated): N Robertson (Aus) bt Si Jiahui (China) 6-2; S Bingham bt H Vafaei (Iran) 6-0; Zhang Anda (China) bt C Wakelin 6-4; M Selby bt K Wilson 6-1.

Tennis

ATP National Bank Open

Montreal: Semi-final B Shelton (US) bt L Tien (US) 6-2, 6-3.

WTA National Bank Open

Toronto: Semi-finals I Swiatek (Pol) bt E Svitolina (Ukr) 6-3, 1-6, 6-3; E Rybakina (Kaz) bt C Gauff (US) 5-7, 6-2, 6-2.

Cincinnati Open

First round: Men M Landaluce (Sp) bt J Draper (GB) 6-3, 7-5; C Norrie (GB) bt D Prizmic (Cro) 3-6, 6-1, 6-4. **Women** Z Sonmez (Turkey) bt D Kasatkina (Aus) 2-6, 7-6 (7-4), 6-3; L Boisson (Fr) bt A Krueger (US) 6-3, 6-2; K Rakhimova (Uzb) bt K Birrell (Aus) 6-2, 6-2; S Waltert (Switz) bt Petra M (Cro) 5-7, 6-4, 6-2; G Ruse (Rom) bt M Linette (Pol) 6-0, 6-3; T Townsend (US) bt C Osorio (Col) 3-6, 6-3, 6-3; M Frech (Po) bt A Ruzic (Cro) 6-2, 7-5; A Kalinina (Ukr) bt D Vidmanova (Cz) 4-6, 6-4, 6-2; T Maria (Ger) bt D Yastremska (Ukr) 6-1, 6-2.

Fixtures

Football

Sky Bet Championship Wolverhampton Wanderers v Blackburn (8.0).

Athletics

Alexander Stadium, Birmingham European Championships.

Cricket

The Hundred eliminators: Kia Oval: Women Sunrisers Leeds v Southern Brave (2.15). **Men** Manchester Super Giants v Sunrisers Leeds (6.0).

Metro Bank Cup: Quarter-finals (11.0): **Emirates Old Trafford** Lancashire v Durham. **Clifton Park** Yorkshire v Notts Outlaws.

Rugby league

Betfred Super League Hull FC v Castleford Tigers (8.0).

Yesterday's racing results

Beverley

Going: Good to firm (good in places)

2.15 (5f) 1, **Not My Type** (Tom Marquand, 6-4); 2, Empress Princess (17-2); 3, Flower Youmzain (28-1). 6 ran. 1¼l, 1¼l. W J Haggas.

2.45 (5f) 1, **Concert Pitch** (Ben Robinson, 8-15 fav); 2, Lairy Mary (15-2); 3, Mrs Mole (12-1). 10 ran. 3¼l, 2½l. B Ellison.

3.15 (7f 75yd) 1, **State of Gold** (W Pyle, 11-2); 2, Court Legend (8-1); 3, Ariane Sky (1-1). 10 ran. 2¼l, ½l. Craig Lidster.

3.45 (5f) 1, **Shazani** (Lewis Edmunds, 7-2); 2, Call To Action (16-1); 3, Castan (10-1). 10 ran. NR: Ingleby Archie, Squealer. ½l, 1½l. S R Bowring.

4.15 (1m 4f 23yd) 1, **Wardlaw** (L Morris, 11-8); 2, Grey Fable (3-1); 3, Mr Moonshine (9-4). 5 ran. NR: Sisterandbrother. 47½l, hd. Sir Mark Prescott.

4.45 (1m 100yd) 1, **Saxon Grace** (Shane Gray, 6-5 fav; **Thunderer's nap**); 2, Copper And Five (6-1); 3, Back From Dubai (15-2). 10 ran. 4¼l, 2l. D Bourke.

Placepot: £19.10 **Quadpot: £6.60**
Jackpot: £1,005.70

Lingfield Park

Going: Standard

5.23 (1m 2f 1yd) 1, **Alice De Clare** (Jonny Peate, 7-1); 2, Barbury Boy (9-2); 3, Kaaranah (4-1). 8 ran. NR: Eagles Attire. nk, 1¼l. J R Fanshawe.

5.58 (7f 1yd) 1, **Huwa Baree** (Callum Shepherd, 3-1); 2, Brushstroke (9-2); 3, Aljoon (1-1). 11 ran. 1l, 2l. C Johnston.

6.28 (7f 1yd) 1, **Split Elevens** (Jack Callan, 7-2); 2, Spirit Of Breeze (6-1); 3, Chelio (8-1). 12 ran. NR: Lerwick. ½l, 1½l. J Butler.

6.58 (6f 1yd) 1, **My Mate Mackley** (Charles Bishop, 3-1); 2, Pure Passion (13-2); 3, Zaltalla (13-8). 8 ran. NR: Dr Ali. 2¼l, nk. Adam Kirby.

7.28 (1m 2f 1yd) 1, **Dove Tale** (R Havlin, 11-8 fav); 2, Walking On Stars (7-2); 3, Shangri La (4-1). 9 ran. ¾l, 2l. J & T Gosden.

7.58 (5f 6yd) 1, **Sultan Darius** (Darragh Keenan, 12-1); 2, Beautiful Effort (13-2); 3, Viking Barbie (12-1). 9 ran. ½l, ¾l. M Botti.

Placepot: £24.20
Quadpot: £9.10

Salisbury

Going: Good (good to firm in places)

5.30 (1m) 1, **Thiscouldbefun** (Isobelle Chalmers, 9-2); 2, Sydney Rock (11-8); 3, Kimeko Glory (13-8). 6 ran. 1l, 3¼l. J S Moore.

6.04 (6f 213yd) 1, **Flooding** (Oisin Murphy, 1-1 fav); 2, Tiora Time (11-10); 3, All Angels (10-1). 5 ran. 1l, 6½l. M Botti.

6.34 (6f 213yd) 1, **Reformation** (Oisin Murphy, 9-4); 2, Serenetta (2-7 fav). 2l. A M Balding.

7.04 (1m) 1, **Siena Storm** (K Shoemark, 2-5); 2, Clarity (4-1); 3, Orchard Hatches (18-1). 4 ran. ½l, 6l. E Walker.

7.34 (1m 4f 5yd) 1, **Ruby Wedding** (Alfie Redman, 9-2); 2, Gloryous (14-1); 3, Liveinthelight (11-1). 7 ran. 2½l, 2¼l. A M Balding.

8.04 (1m 1f 201yd) 1, **Supplicate** (J Mitchell, 11-8); 2, Sudbury Hill (8-1); 3, On The Inlet (20-1). 4 ran. NR: Akho Mezzna, Storm Point. 2l, 4½l. R Varian.

Placepot: £130.70

Quadpot: £94.60

Windsor

Going: Good to Firm

5.36 (6f 12yd) 1, **Madman** (D Egan, 6-1); 2, Dark Alley (40-1); 3, Maid In Devon (3-1 fav). 11 ran. 37½l, ¾l. R Cook & J Bridger.

6.11 (6f 12yd) 1, **Methgal** (P J Dobbs, 10-3); 2, Lahina Bay (12-1); 3, Legendsoftheland (9-2). 11 ran. NR: Rye. 1¼l, sh. Dylan Cunha.

6.41 (1m 31yd) 1, **Colourband** (Harry Davies, 13-8 fav); 2, Knights Gold (9-1); 3, Signcastle City (15-2). 8 ran. 2l, ¾l. S & E Crisford.

7.11 (1m 2f) 1, **Waterford Castle** (Billy Loughnane, 4-6 fav); 2, Partying (11-8); 3, Sergei Breeze (33-1). 6 ran. 1½l, 1½l. G Boughey.

7.41 (1m 2f) 1, **City Of Poets** (Rob Hornby, 4-1); 2, Law Court (5-1); 3, A Major Payne (100-30 fav). 8 ran. 2l, nk. J Tate.

8.11 (1m 3f 99yd) 1, **Aravalli** (Taylor Fisher, 11-2); 2, Roker Roar (8-1); 3, Mythological Star (4-6 fav). 4 ran. sh, 1½l. J Tickle.

Placepot: £56.60
Quadpot: £12.10

Hunt strikes gold and roars: Are you not entertained?

Hunt, right, follows up her success in the 100m to win gold in

Matt Lawton

Chief Sports Correspondent

To go with those new gold earrings Amy Hunt now has a rather nice pair of matching medals, with the latest sprint queen of British athletics completing a quite brilliant European double here in Birmingham last night.

Hunt had revealed after her victory in the 100m on Monday how an upgrade from her two individual silvers had followed a timely purchase by her parents. Noting that she only ever wore silver jewellery, they chose to splash out on their speedy daughter in the hope it would inspire a pursuit of more precious metal on the track.

Clearly, it has worked. Hunt delivered a performance over 200m that seemed particularly significant, elevating her beyond even the summit of another European podium. "Are you not entertained?!" she screamed to a television camera in full Maximus Decimus Meridius mode, indicating with her right hand that she had now won two of the four medals that remain her objective for the week.

While Hunt will return to the track with Dina Asher-Smith this weekend as they chase further glory in the 4x100m and the mixed 4x100m, this already felt like a passing of the baton between a 30-year-old once great champion and her 24-year-old successor.

Hunt is certainly moving into new territory after that breakthrough performance at last year's World Championships, when she took silver over the longer sprint distance. She has dipped below 11 seconds for 100m for the first time this season and further enhanced her reputation as a major championship performer, with the time of 22.19sec all the more impressive for the fact that a track laid for the 2022 Commonwealth Games is not the fastest, most expensive surface.

As one might expect from a Cambridge graduate, Hunt ran an intelligent race. She did not panic when Asher-Smith came off the bend a fraction ahead, trusting her superior top-end pace and fitness to carry her past her compatriot as well as Ireland's Rhasidat Adeleke, who split the two Britons in second.

That there was a decent crowd to see it this time, close to Alexander Stadium's 23,000 capacity and more than double the number of spectators who came here on Monday, must have made it sweeter still.

Hunt revealed afterwards that the 200m has actually been more of a challenge this year because of an issue with low blood pressure.

"I have had a lot of health things going on this year, some really, really low blood pressure," she told the BBC.

"The 200s have been really scary. I have been nearly fainting after a lot of my 200s this year.

"I had to go into that one and get on the bend and just be really brave. It was an amazing race. I was thinking about my coach. He said before I went in, just imagine me in lane ten with a stopwatch and a whistle. Just keep those thighs up, girl. Just keep going.

"The crowd was amazing. This is becoming a magical week and one I will remember for the rest of my life."

It is not over yet, of course. "I have got the 4x100m and mixed relay too," she added. "I hope you are not sick of my face."

Sadly, a third British medal hope evaporated earlier in the evening, with Max Burgin suffering an injury during the warm-up and withdrawing only minutes before the men's 800m final.

Burgin has so much talent but so much bad luck too, with his fragile body too often breaking down. He runs remarkably fast for an athlete who often has to temper his training to avoid injury, and missed out on Commonwealth Games glory in Glasgow last month after picking up a virus. This goes down as another episode in a long history of misfortune for the 24-year-old.

In his absence, a man called English from Ireland triumphed. Never before has a male Irish athlete won at the European Championships, but the 33-year-old doctor Mark English improved on two previous bronze medals to take gold here with a perfectly executed race, attacking with about 90 metres remaining to win in 1:45.26. With a large Irish contingent in the stands, the place erupted.

There were yet more concerns for the organisers, as well as further sources of embarrassment after the poor attendance figures of the first few days.

After securing a seventh individual European title in the men's 5,000m this week, Jakob Ingebrigtsen took a swipe at his great rival, Josh Kerr, for not turning up to these championships.

Kerr has chosen to sit out this competition after following his world record in the mile in London last month with that superb performance to take gold over the same distance at the Commonwealth Games. Ingebrigtsen is clearly unimpressed, however, accusing the Scot of "ruining the sport".

Speaking to the BBC, the Norwegian double Olympic champion was asked if he was disappointed not to see Kerr in Birmingham.

"Very, and I think a lot of people should be, because that is what championships are all about," he said.

"It's not for us as athletes to choose almost where to participate. We have these championships for a reason, and that is for the best athletes to compete; that is the whole point. So I definitely think it is ruining the sport if we are not participating. We all have different plans, but I could never see myself in that position."

The German middle-distance runner, Smilla Kolbe, raised her concerns about social media trolls racially abusing some of her team-mates.

Kolbe, who has competed here in the women's 800m, made the point, unprompted, in a television interview after failing to progress to today's final.

"Can I just say one more thing?" she said. "I read so many comments and I'm really grateful for all the support we're getting, but even so, I see some really

BEN STANSALL/AFPGETTY IMAGES

the 200m in Birmingham. Asher-Smith, centre, had to settle for a bronze medal

harsh comments in the comment section of certain athletes.

"I'd like us to represent Germany here and, somehow, get support from everyone watching and I'd expect a bit more respect. And I'm really pleased that so many people are supporting me, but I don't want to imagine what it would be like if I wasn't as white as I am, and it was important for me to say that. I expect all viewers to show the necessary respect and to celebrate the fantastic performances of our athletes."

A source of more blushes for the organisers came in the form of a major cock-up by officials who forgot to raise the bar in the pole vault for group B of the men's decathlon. It meant the athletes who thought they had cleared a new height had in fact cleared the same one twice, wasting precious energy.

A statement from European Athletics said: "The error was identified by the officials at the end of the attempts for this bar. In order to ensure fairness to all athletes, the results of this additional 4.70m round were cancelled, and the competition was resumed at 4.80m."

MARTIN RICKETT/PA

Werro hits the ground after being brought down in her semi-final but will race in the final

Down but not out: Werro into 800m final

Keely Hodgkinson's fiercest rival was dramatically reinstated after suffering a fall in the women's 800m semi-finals in Birmingham (Matt Lawton writes).

The most eagerly anticipated contest at these European Championships took an unexpected twist when Audrey Werro, who is threatening Hodgkinson's status as the world's best female 800m runner, was sent crashing to the ground.

Werro, who inflicted a shock defeat on Hodgkinson at a Diamond League meeting in Stockholm in June with the third-fastest time in history, was comfortably in control of her heat when she landed heavily on to the kerb with about 120m remaining. She eventually finished in last place, clutching her chest after crossing the line in 2min 35.35sec.

Initially, Werro was not advanced to tonight's final. But the referees reviewed the video replays, with one angle showing the left hand of France's Anaïs Bourgoin inadvertently caught the 22-year-old Swiss runner's right foot.

Within an hour, both Werro and Lithuania's Gabija Galvydyte, who also fell as a consequence, were reinstated and advanced to a final that now includes ten athletes rather than the usual eight.

"It's always safer to run at the front but today there were risks — I could sense things were hectic behind me," Werro said. "I've only got a few scrapes. It knocked the wind out of me at the time."

Race officials later released a statement saying that the decision to advance both Werro and Galvydyte to the final was due to "an unintentional touch" involving Werro and Bourgoin.

Hodgkinson had no such issues in her race, finishing in 1:57.38, ahead of Femke Broeders-Bol, the 400m hurdles world champion and expressed a desire to see Werro in the final.

"[It's] a real shame, I hope she is OK and is in the final," Hodgkinson said of Werro prior to the referees making their decision.

"Hopefully it's a good race and clean race and with no one falling over."

Rahm may have to quit LIV to play at Ryder Cup

CONTINUED FROM BACK

for him to compete in the Ryder Cup at Adare Manor in Ireland next year.

But DP World Tour bosses have now indicated that it is highly unlikely such conditional releases will be granted to LIV players next year. Eight other players had struck similar deals in February, including Tyrrell Hatton, Thomas Detry and Adrian Meronk.

All those players must now consider whether to commit to a revised LIV programme next year, which is being scaled down after the rebel tour recently lost funding from Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund.

PIF had poured more than £3.5 billion into the tour since it was launched four years ago but its future existence has been plunged into doubt in recent months, although Scott O'Neil, the LIV chief executive, said last week that a new lead investor had been secured to support the tour until 2030.

Rahm, then, will need to make a decision in the coming weeks on whether he commits to playing in a new LIV structure — likely to have fewer events and smaller prize funds — in the knowledge that he could be jeopardising his participation in the Ryder Cup, having represented Europe four times previously.

Rahm agreed a deal that enabled him to play on the DP World Tour

When the DP World Tour agreed conditional releases with the nine players this year, it stressed that the deals did not set a precedent for future seasons and that position has now been firmed up as it has told LIV players that such arrangements will be highly unlikely to be made in 2027.

In that case, conditional releases would still be considered on a case-by-case basis, but it would be expected to resume the imposition of heavy fines on tour members for competing in LIV Golf, through the DP Tour's conflicting events rule.

LIV has yet to announce its schedule for next year, but its 2026 season is due to end early as its Team Championship event, scheduled for this month, has been cancelled, adding more uncertainty as Rahm and his fellow LIV players weigh up their futures.

Rahm has starred for Europe in recent Ryder Cups, scoring three points in the historic victory over United States in New York last year, continuing Spain's strong tradition in the competition.

He has formed a formidable partnership in the event with Hatton, remaining unbeaten in five matches together, and winning four of them.

Rahm joined LIV in December 2023 for a reported £222 million and has since earned more than $90 million (£66.75 million) in three seasons on the rebel tour.

In an interview with The Times this year, Luke Donald, the Europe Ryder Cup captain, stated that he was optimistic Rahm would be available to him again next year.

"It's part of my job to try and make him available," Donald said.

Draper's US Open wild card hopes suffer body blow

M Landaluce (Sp)	**6**	**7**
J Draper (GB)	**3**	**5**

Tennis

Tom Kershaw Tennis Correspondent

There was no outpouring of emotion this time, nor a shortage of spirit, but Jack Draper's defeat against Spain's Martin Landaluce in the first round of the Cincinnati Open was another hollowing blow — and did his already fragile hopes of receiving a US Open wild card no favours.

The former world No 4 broke down in tears in Montreal after losing on his latest comeback from the bone bruising injury that has saddled him for the best part of 18 months. The positive news was that Draper was fit enough to play only his seventh tournament of the season, but shedding the rust and rediscovering his form after so many absences will be another trying ordeal.

Draper is tweaking his serve to reduce the strain on his arm, but that remains a work in progress and 12 double faults meant he was on the back foot from the off against Landaluce, the world No 64. The 24-year-old Briton rallied after losing the first set and went two breaks up in the second as he showed glimpses of his old self, even if his forehand lacked the same spite, but closing it out proved a Sisyphean task. Draper spurned six set points as his feet slowed and his shot selection erred and a 6-3, 7-5 loss from that position arrived as a miserable sucker punch.

Draper required a wild card to enter both Montreal and Cincinnati, with his ranking now a lowly No 143. His past success and popularity on the ATP Tour provided that lifeline, but the United States Tennis Association may not be so generous. Draper reached the US Open semi-finals in 2024, but American players will invariably be prioritised, while Stan Wawrinka and Grigor Dimitrov are likely to be ahead of him in the queue. Draper has entered into the revamped US Open mixed doubles with Jessica Pegula — and the marketability of that pairing could perhaps help persuade organisers to afford him a singles wild card — but otherwise he will have to come through qualifying, which also takes place in the week prior to the main draw in New York.

Draper made an early Cincinnati Open exit

Landaluce, 20, has risen nearly 100 places in the rankings since January. However, his form has dipped markedly since then, with his previous four matches ending in first-round defeats, and Draper would have been cautiously optimistic after seeing the draw.

But the mental strain of his recurring injury and short-lived comebacks has understandably left Draper nursing plenty of scar tissue. He described Montreal as "rock bottom" and admitted he "didn't recognise the player I was out on the court due to my injuries". Draper added that he had reached the "acceptance phase" with his new reality now, but that still entails no quick fix.

A 54 per cent first-serve percentage and 13 unforced errors to only four winners made for a grim summary of the first set. Landaluce had service problems of his own and was called for a foot fault three times, but held his nerve well and swung freely, given his own recent struggles, to close out the set.

Draper evidenced his dogged determination after the change of ends to immediately break Landaluce's serve, but his own serve remained brittle. He saved break points in three consecutive games, and Draper seemed to have finally been rewarded for that resilience when he moved 5-2 ahead. Instead, as has sadly been the case for him so often of late, it proved a false dawn.

Teenage star Madjo barred from playing for Villa until last week

Striker's move was blocked until court ruling – and he can also play for England, writes **Charlotte Duncker**

Brian Madjo's first Aston Villa goal had been a long time coming. It was the fourth opportunity the teenage striker had at Stadion Salzburg in the Super Cup final, but it had been in the making for much longer than that. Had it not been for Fifa red tape the 17-year-old would probably have made his debut for Unai Emery's side last season, having signed from French club Metz in January.

But the governing body blocked his transfer, believing it was a breach of its rule that limits international moves for players under the age of 18.

Instead of being able to contribute on the pitch, Madjo could only train with his new team-mates, and was unable to put any of it into practice.

Villa were confident they would be able to overturn the decision but it took time, which seemed ridiculous given that the teenager was born in Enfield, north London, in 2009 and holds a British passport.

The sticking point for Fifa had been that Madjo grew up in Luxembourg and played for their under-16s before making his debut for the senior team in March 2025. However, he then made his first appearance for England Under-17 that same year — he is able to switch his allegiance given his three senior appearances for Luxembourg came in friendlies, making him eligible to represent England.

Two hundred and five days after he was unveiled as a Villa player, the Court of Arbitration for Sport said it had found in Villa's favour and confirmed he would be eligible to play in competitive matches for the club before his 18th birthday. The teenager marked the moment with an Instagram post accompanied with the caption: "No distractions, I'm free."

His father is Guy Madjo, a former Cameroon youth international who had spells with several English clubs, including Crawley Town, Stevenage and Shrewsbury Town.

Villa had been scouting Madjo for a while and it shows the depth of their belief in his talent that they would spend £10 million on a forward with very little first-team experience at a time where they are having to be astute with their transfer spending.

But over the past eight months, and a successful pre-season in which he had already scored four goals coming into the game against Paris Saint-Germain, Emery had seen enough to hand him his competitive debut at the first available opportunity.

Maybe those nerves showed a little as he snatched at early chances. But if the 6ft 4in striker has shown anything during his time at the club it is that he is patient and not willing to give up.

John McGinn kept delivering balls into the area; the first three times Madjo had failed to find the target. His movement and physicality had been keeping Willian Pacho and Marquinhos on their toes, but he was just missing that final touch.

The chance he did convert was arguably the hardest that had fallen his way as he held off Pacho to volley in a McGinn cross past Matvey Safonov at his near post, making him the youngest player to have scored in the competition. He wheeled away in celebration, releasing his arms from behind his back, indicating that the metaphorical shackles are now off.

ANGELIKA WARMUTH/REUTERS

Madjo, 17, started and scored against Paris Saint-Germain in the Super Cup

Emery will be delighted that he has another option in attack. Villa have not ruled out signing another forward before the transfer window closes, but with Madjo they have a player who is capable of bullying Premier League defenders off the ball and, more importantly, someone who has been studying his team's style for the past eight months.

The teenager cites playing against senior teams from a young age as being important in helping him with the intensity of his game and dealing with the responsibility of the expectations at a big club. But that time without any pressure to perform has also aided him.

Previous new signings have spoken about the time it has taken them to bed into Villa's team due to the demands placed on them by Emery. But it was evident from the way he played against PSG that Madjo was comfortable with the system and the role he was being asked to play.

He knew when and how to press and, having watched Ollie Watkins closely, he was trying to replicate the work the England striker does off the ball as well as on it. If he continues to study his Villa team-mate, he may well find himself following in his path internationally too, given that England must plan for an eventual life after Harry Kane.

There were things to improve upon, but on first glance it was an appearance against two of the best centre backs in the world that should give him confidence going into the new season.

"Obviously he is a tough person to defend against. I think he is about 100kg. He is a big old boy," Tyrone Mings, the Villa defender, said. "He is very, very difficult to play against."

Heatstroke tragedy reminds us rugby is not summer sport

Stuart Barnes

Rugby is not a summer sport. It's not that long ago that an idiotic minority of newcomers to the game thought a sunny version of glorified sevens was the future with attrition relegated to the boring bits; all those endless scrums and mauls. We now know it's not even safe to play from the middle of May to June. Not safe, not only for players but also spectators.

It's a sport in which new levels of awareness are required on the training field as much as on match day. Saimoni Vunilagi, 6ft 5in and 18st 6lb, died last Friday after suffering a suspected heatstroke in training. Last week the temperature reached 35C in the Japanese city of Fukuoka. The Fijian second-row forward had recently joined the second-tier team Kyuden Voltex. Despite receiving an immediate diagnosis and being taken to hospital, he died four days later. Only 26 years of age. This, not some high-profile defeat, is the very definition of a tragedy, for the Fijian, his friends and family.

For those of us who had never heard of him, it left what is often called the rugby family with the sort of sadness that lingers and leaves you wondering. Wondering whether his demise was "one of those things" or whether it serves as a warning for the sport.

In 2019 as many as 149 people died in Japan while the Rugby World Cup was taking place in that country. Typhoon Hagibis hit Japan in October 2019, towards the end of the typhoon season. The cancellation of three pool games, including England v France, gained its ridiculously unbalanced share of headlines compared with the death toll, but that is the nature of global events.

The Fifa World Cup is probably the greatest sports competition of them all. Yes, the recent hydration breaks were a reminder of the hardcore capitalism of the United States, but there were times when heat and humidity had the commentators, let alone the footballers, struggling and in legitimate need of water.

On the subject of World Cups, there was, in the dim past of October 2023, clarification of the timing for the 2031 men's Rugby World Cup, to be held in the US. But since then there has been silence, and where there is silence online, rumours run amok. The fact is that the majority of cities and stadiums that have applied to host rugby's jamboree are NFL

Vunilagi, 26, died of suspected heatstroke

stadiums and the tournament would clash with both America's game and the major football leagues. Could the US try to shift the usual schedules? It wouldn't be the first time.

The prospect of a World Cup in the heat of an American summer with who knows what degree of humidity and heat by then? It is a frightening proposition. Or rather, *was*. This week World Rugby sources confirmed to me that the event will not be moved to summer for the benefit of American markets. If Vunilagi's premature death was the worst rugby story for a long time, the confirmation that the World Cup will not be an insane summer event is the best.

The temperature in Wiltshire has just risen beyond 35C as I write this column. More flies are falling than rain. The grass is baked, bone hard. In Wednesday's edition of The Times I read of fans paying £80 next season for Bath seats in the open with the delight of rain pouring down upon them. Maybe by September, but don't bet on it.

In 2022 six weekends of Premiership rugby were lost to extreme weather — hard pitches due to drought at the start of the season and wet weather in December and February. We know that we are set for more extreme extremes in the general future.

Summer lasting too long and autumn pouring into winter and spring. These sorts of seasons aren't what they once were for supporters, although it's better than burning up in June and July. The weather extremes are bad news for everyone. The ground in these parts is so hard that referees would judge the pitch unfit to play as if a frozen winter's day. Drought cannot be too far away as the rugby pitches in southwest England crumble.

If anyone thinks artificial surfaces are the answer, they have a tendency to heat up when the going gets even hotter. World Rugby addressed the climatic issue in 2024. "Sustainability" was an annoyingly long-favoured buzzword as the sevens sides jetted unsustainably around the world. But the landmark World Rugby report *Rugby and Climate Change* was a leap in the right direction. There are well-meaning and serious plans to reduce environmental impacts. And climate crisis is described as "an existential threat to the game we love".

As the science shows, the world is heating up. Heatwaves, we are reminded (tragically so), affect player performances as well as spectators' health. These are not facts that do much for the economic wellbeing of a professional sporting business.

Droughts will, we are told, "more frequently" affect turf pitches, while hard rains promise submersions from flooding. These are troubled times for the planet. There is no escape for rugby and rugby is only a blessed and brief respite from the troubles.

Some naive fool could have convinced the sport's powerbrokers that summer-night rugby would have been a sexy, sensational escape from what look very much like the good old days.

Mowbray ready for Blackburn job after cancer

Manager's life changed after bowel cancer but he is back in dugout and eyeing promotion, writes **Paul Joyce**

Tony Mowbray had been up since 3am. The previous day there had been a meeting in Switzerland with the Blackburn Rovers owner Venky's and the early alarm call preceded the trip to the airport to catch a flight from Zurich back to Manchester.

Upon landing, there were calls to make, media commitments to fulfil and the running of a football club to oversee. At 62, Mowbray shows no sign of slowing down.

He had the option to do so, of course. Having overcome bowel cancer, he then experienced a bruising, short-lived spell in charge of West Bromwich Albion. A quieter, less stressful routine would have appealed to many.

Yet it was while he was out with his cockapoo, Bailey, on Redcar sands that the nagging realisation crystallised that he was not ready to call time on football for good.

So Mowbray is back at Blackburn, guiding the club where he first spent five years at the helm between 2017 and 2022, and preparing for the new Championship season with a trip to Wolverhampton Wanderers tonight.

"I had those moments walking my dog on the beach thinking, 'I need more through this part of my life,'" he explained. "Because football is what I do. I feel as if I can impact young footballers, to drive themselves to want to get better, to be part of a team that can produce amazing results, better than what the individuals might think they are.

"So that's why I'm back, because I genuinely sit and watch football matches and think, 'Why is he doing that? Why on earth is that happening on the pitch?' You know? And I'm back to challenge my theories of how I want to play, how I do it."

After 45 years in football — 670 games as a player with Middlesbrough, Celtic and Ipswich Town and more than 880 matches as a manager with nine different clubs — his passion for the game is undimmed.

Still, life has changed in many other ways. Mowbray had 15 centimetres of his bowel removed when he was battling cancer in 2024 but meets the obstacles that have resulted from that with a smile.

"I live with different circumstances now, but I've got no problem sharing it," he said. "I have a colostomy bag. So that changes your life. But as long as you are disciplined and you manage things, it's not a problem. I have to be wary of eating at certain times, doing things at certain times.

"I've been recuperating from my illness, of course. I'm not silly. If I wasn't ready, I wouldn't be back. It's not fair on Blackburn Rovers. It wouldn't be fair on the fans or the team, if I was lacking energy.

Wolves v Blackburn
Sky Bet Championship, tonight, 8pm
TV: Sky Sports Main Event/Football

MATT WEST/SHUTTERSTOCK

Mowbray's Blackburn side will kick off their bid for promotion to the top flight away to Wolves this evening

"I had four or five offers from other clubs during my recuperation and at that time I didn't feel I was ready. I didn't think it was the right thing for me to do to move away from home, move away from your family, go and live in a flat somewhere and try and dedicate your life to try and make your football team better. But as long as I've got the energy to do the job, and I know I have, and I manage that, then I'm going to be fine."

Mowbray remains wedded to the front-foot, attacking philosophy he has adhered to throughout a managerial career spanning more than 20 years, which will serve as a change to the mid-to-deep block, counterattacking approach Blackburn have adopted in more recent times.

The Ewood Park club have finished 7th, 19th, 7th and 20th in the seasons since Mowbray left the club upon the expiry of his contract and orchestrating a lasting revival will be far from straightforward.

Even though the Championship play-offs have been expanded to six sides this season, the list of fallen giants in the division is lengthy. Opta's supercomputer this week predicted that Blackburn have a 15 per cent chance of relegation, with only eight sides deemed to be more at risk.

Defying gloomy predictions serves as motivation and Mowbray is hoping for favours from Blackburn's top-flight neighbours in the form of loan deals.

Liverpool's Harvey Elliott and Everton's Jarrad Branthwaite previously benefited from time under Mowbray's tutelage, while Manchester United's Amad Diallo played under him at Sunderland.

"We'll see if we can do that again because the team needs a little bit of magic from somewhere, a bit of quality that is hard to get simply by buying it," he said. "If you can loan a young player with lots of quality, but who is not quite ready for the Premier League, then hopefully it helps us to be more successful than we might be without them."

If Mowbray is looking to tap into the future, then the past remains a stimulus for him and, in particular, the former Liverpool manager Bill Shankly.

"He was an orator, he had a way with words, he could take the whole city of Liverpool along with him," he said. "He inspired me. In fact, I named my first dog after him.

"I like to talk to my football team and inspire them with words, getting the hairs on the back of their neck up ready to fight in every game they are in. You know, we might concede more chances, but I think we'll score more goals and it'll be more exciting for the fans to come and watch a team that's trying to win football matches rather than not get beat. I want Blackburn to be a team that people talk about when they talk about the best teams, with a genuine chance of getting to the Premier League."

Speaking at the launch of the new EFL season at the National Football Museum in Manchester last week, the conversation turned to how management has changed. A three-month spell at West Brom 18 months ago was particularly eye-opening.

"I found it was really different from when I went to West Brom as the manager in 2006-07 and we went on to win the Championship," he said. "Now we had sporting directors who were using AI and were using every piece of data that was there and influencing the selection of the team.

"And I think it undermines coaches. If agents of the players know that they can go above you to somebody else, it undermines your power in the dressing room.

"Blackburn have still got sporting directors, Rudy Gestede [head of football operations], and they've got technical directors and heads of sports science and performance. But I feel as if I'll be allowed to manage the football team."

Salford boss goes solo after years as 'soldier' to Postecoglou

Dominic Akiboye

Peter Cklamovski has spent much of his coaching life in the shadow of Ange Postecoglou. Now, as he begins his first job in English football, he wants to step out of it while embracing his former mentor's teachings.

"We'll win something in the first season, how about that?" Cklamovski said when asked whether he had inherited any of Postecoglou's famous appetite for making bold predictions.

His ambition is genuine. Cklamovski, 47, has arrived at Salford City with the club seeking promotion from League Two, led by owners whose aspirations stretch far beyond the fourth tier.

Cklamovski's confidence has been forged by an unconventional career. The Australian's playing aspirations were ended in his teenage years by a serious car accident, with Cklamovski under consideration for Australia's under-17 squad before the incident. In his twenties, he began coaching youth teams at The King's School in Sydney before becoming head of performance at Westfields Sports High School, but his development was shaped principally by Postecoglou, with whom he worked for 15 years.

The pair first worked together with Australia's youth set-up in 2004, and their professional partnership eventually took them through Brisbane Roar, the Australian national team and Yokohama F Marinos.

At Brisbane, Cklamovski was part of the coaching staff under Postecoglou as the club won consecutive A-League titles in 2011 and 2012, an unprecedented achievement in Australian domestic football at the time. He then joined Postecoglou with the national team, including at the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, and was part of the staff that won the 2015 Asian Cup.

Their most celebrated club success came in Japan. Cklamovski joined Yokohama F Marinos as Postecoglou's assistant in 2018 and helped create the aggressive, high-tempo football that took the club to the 2019 J1 League title, their first championship in 15 years.

"My career and everything I do, I want it to be an extension of his legacy," Cklamovski said. "That's how much I love this guy."

Yet Cklamovski's managerial career has been far from a straightforward ascent. His first senior job came at Shimizu S-Pulse in 2020, where results were poor; he won only three of 28 league matches before leaving during the disrupted Covid season. He rebuilt his reputation at Montedio Yamagata in Japan's second tier, taking them to the J2 play-offs in 2022 and developing a reputation for attacking football.

Cklamovski, of Salford City, spent 15 years working with Postecoglou

At FC Tokyo, where he was appointed midway through 2023, he inherited a team struggling for direction, and a year later he had reshaped the side around a front-footed, high-pressing style with a heavy emphasis on youth. He then spent 18 months coaching the Malaysia national team, taking the country to its highest Fifa ranking in 20 years, before he departed by mutual consent in June.

"His [Postecoglou's] passion was always Europe. So as a loyal soldier for him, I gave everything to that cause," Cklamovski said. "My journey was always just to be a strong, well-respected manager in Asia, but a few months ago, something within myself changed — the switch flipped to get to Europe."

Cklamovski's years in Japan have given him a distinctive view of player development. He points to Japan's school and university football systems as an additional pathway that does not exist in the same form in England. He also believes coaching should be adapted to the people in front of him rather than following one model.

At Salford, that means creating something that is not simply an imitation of the Class of '92, the former Manchester United stars who have shaped the club's modern history. Sir David Beckham and Gary Neville's involvement in Salford may have brought an extraordinary level of football pedigree to the project, but Cklamovski insists the next chapter cannot simply belong to them.

"I'm not the Class of '92, and the players aren't the Class of '92," he said. "We can have our own DNA on what Salford football is."

His appointment follows the club's latest disappointment: defeat by Notts County in the League Two play-off final, after missing out on automatic promotion by one point, which led to Karl Robinson's dismissal. Salford's rapid rise of four promotions in five years after the Class of '92 takeover has stalled in recent times, with the club still seeking to escape the fourth tier after seven years in the division.

Salford's summer signings point to a side desperate to finally overcome what has proved to be a difficult hurdle. Macaulay Langstaff joins from Millwall — he scored 28 League Two goals for Notts County in 2023-24 — while Luke Molyneux provided eight goals and seven assists at Doncaster Rovers in League One last season. The centre back Will Aimson (from Wigan Athletic) and winger Abraham Odoh (from Peterborough United) also add experience from higher divisions.

The owners, Cklamovski said, would be "some of the happiest people in the world" if Salford were "touching a trophy" within 12 months.

His challenge is to turn 15 years of learning from Postecoglou, seven years of experience in Japan and a brief spell with Malaysia into something that can spur Salford out of League Two.

Sport Football

‘I’m pushing boundaries and

Carrick likes United’s midfield and knows how Mainoo feels after frustrating summer, writes **Paul Hirst**

The Premier League season is yet to begin and Michael Carrick is already in a celebratory mood.

Yesterday morning, as he sat down to eat breakfast at United’s five-star hotel 30 minutes west of Dublin, Carrick’s phone buzzed. On the end of the line was his daughter, Louise, who had some good news.

“My daughter just passed her exams [A-levels] today, so that was a nice bit of good news,” Carrick, 45, said with a proud smile a couple of hours later during a briefing with national newspapers.

Carrick has had a lot on his plate this summer. Both of his children have been sitting exams (Jacey has been doing his GCSEs), he has been busy planning his first pre-season campaign as United head coach, and he has been in regular contact with his superiors as they try to recruit new players.

Oh, and he has been keeping in contact with the 12 United players at the World Cup too. Kobbie Mainoo’s number was one of the most dialled in his phonebook — more on that later.

“It’s not been anything that’s caught me by surprise. It’s kind of what it is and you deal with it,” Carrick said when asked about his hectic summer, which ended three weeks ago when the players who were not at the World Cup returned to training at United’s Carrington base.

“The summer was good. We did manage to have a little holiday.”

During our 20-minute interview in one of the many conference rooms at Carton House, where United arrived last Saturday after drawing with Paris Saint-Germain in Gothenburg, it is clear that Carrick is buoyant about the season ahead.

Having signed a two-year contract, with the option of a further year, to become United’s full-time head coach three months ago, Carrick has the backing of the board and has hushed — certainly for now — the doubters who claimed he was not up to the job.

On Wednesday night he felt a real rush as the United coach weaved around the streets of Dublin, which were lined with fans, en route to Croke Park, where 82,000 supporters — including seven pitch invaders — watched his team defeat Leeds United on penalties after drawing 1-1 in 90 minutes.

Rather than flying long haul to the United States or Far East for pre-season, United decided on a “football first” policy, designed to look after the players, which involved being based in Manchester and flying in and out to play friendlies in Helsinki, Trondheim, Stockholm and Gothenburg.

“[Being United head coach] is a really privileged position and I fully understand what it is, what it brings,” Carrick said, the morning after the first match at Croke Park between two English football teams.

“I love the position that I’m in. I never take anything that this position and this football club brings for granted. Driving to the stadium last night, it felt like a bit of an occasion and it really showcased the support and what we are as a football club.

“So to be at the top of that and leading us into new territory again, we’re pushing boundaries and it’s a great position to be in, yeah, and I genuinely absolutely love every part.”

Although he would like to add another left back and midfielder to his squad before the transfer window closes on September 1, he has been enthused by the three signings that United have made so far.

Andrey Santos, who has started every pre-season game since his £50 million move from Chelsea, has impressed staff with his leadership skills and maturity even though he is only 22 years old.

“Andrey, for such a young man to come in the way he’s come in, his character, his personality is a dream,” Carrick said of the former Brazil Under-21 captain. “He’s so positive, so mature, so switched on; he wants to learn. He comes in straight away and he’s trying to help other players and talk in games and communicate in games, and has that personality where he’s got a real substance to him, and delighted to have him, delighted to have him when he came in.”

Youri Tielemans, the £35 million signing from Aston Villa, is described as a “top personality” and a “team player who understands how to connect everyone together”. Carrick added: “The two midfielders will give us an awful lot moving forward.”

Although Carrick deserved a shot at the job long-term after winning 12 of his 17 matches and leading United to third, this season will test his managerial skills, and those of his backroom staff, much more. Having qualified for the Champions League, no longer will they have midweeks free to work with the players.

Carrick’s man-management skills will be tested, but he is a pro in that area according to those who know him, and the fact that he reached out to Mainoo several times during the World Cup, in an attempt to keep his spirits up, reflects well on the United head coach.

Carrick, above, has been very impressed by the leadership skills and maturity of new arrival Santos, left, describing the

Game podcast

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thetimes.com/podcasts/the-game

After being ignored by Carrick’s predecessor, Ruben Amorim, Mainoo enjoyed an impressive second half of the season under Carrick but did not play a single minute during the World Cup.

Having received similar treatment from Fabio Capello during the 2010 World Cup, when England had the likes of Steven Gerrard and Frank Lampard to pick from, Carrick knows how damaging that can be. “I was in contact with him quite a bit through the summer,” Carrick said of Mainoo, 21.

“I’ve been in that position myself and I know what it’s like. From the outside, everyone goes, ‘You should be happy to be there,’ and you do take it for granted, for sure, but as a human being and a professional, you want to be playing. It’s frustrating and I understand it, but he’s been in great spirits this week and it’s nice for him to be home and looking forward to the new season.”

Whether United have a successful season will depend largely on the performance of Mainoo, Santos, Tielemans and Mason Mount, who are the four players slated to compete for the two slots in the double pivot unless a new recruit arrives.

Santos and Mount have been the main combination so far in their pre-season campaign, which has included wins against Leeds, Atletico Madrid and Rosenborg, as well as a draw against PSG and a defeat by Wrexham. That is mainly because Tielemans and Mainoo joined up late with the squad because of their participation in the latter stages of the World Cup.

All four players are technicians, rather than destroyers, which is a similar approach to the one Sir Alex Ferguson took in 2006-07, when he paired Carrick with Paul Scholes in midfield.

“Just being a midfielder, that’s kind of how I’ve seen the game,” he said. “It’s the kind of football I think the supporters want to see as well.”

And with that, our time with Carrick is up. Next stop: the golf course, where he will be hoping to celebrate yet another win.

CONTINUED FROM BACK

Rashford set to stay

answers for that,” Carrick said when asked why United were not spending as much as their competitors.

“We’re pushing everything that we can to make the best of it.”

He added: “I think there’s a balance of responsibility in this club.”

Marcus Rashford looks set to stay after Barcelona turned down the opportunity to sign him for £26 million. “He’s our player,” Carrick said.

Carrick said Fernandes is ‘in a really good place’

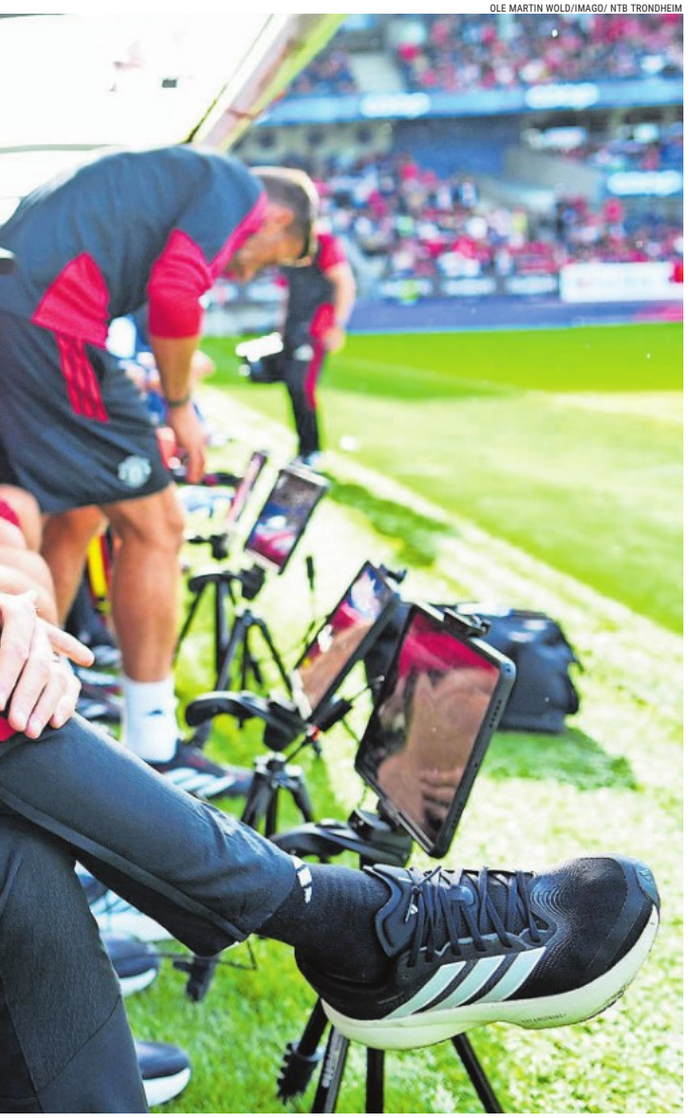
Carrick said that Bruno Fernandes is “in a really good place and looking forward to the season”, despite being linked with a departure earlier in the summer.

Galatasaray, Juventus and AC Milan are keeping tabs on the 31-year-old.

“We still want to get the best out of Bruno and get the best out of the team around him,” Carrick said. “He’s been so positive since I came back.”

loving it’

OLE MARTIN WOLD/IMAGO/ NTB TRONDHEIM



22-year-old as “a dream”. He said Tielemans, below left, was “a top personality”

Reijnders leaving City for Saudi Arabia in £52m deal

Paul Hirst

Manchester City’s Tijjani Reijnders has agreed to join Al-Qadsiah, the Saudi Pro League club, in a £52 million deal.

Despite interest from Nottingham Forest, the 28-year-old Netherlands midfielder has decided to join the Saudi club, who are managed by Brendan Rodgers, thus earning a big pay rise in the process.

Reijnders, who joined City in a £46.3 million move from AC Milan last summer, will complete his move once he has undergone a medical and all the relevant paperwork has been signed off.

Reijnders held down a regular place in the City team at the start of last season but fell out of favour in the autumn and only started five Premier League matches in the second half of the campaign.

Reijnders only joined City last year from AC Milan

He made 50 appearances for City, scoring seven goals and setting up eight more.

Meanwhile, Jérémy Doku has become the fourth player to extend his City contract this summer.

The 24-year-old Belgium winger, who was one of City’s best players in the second half of last season, has signed a new five-year contract, with the option of a further year.

His previous contract was due to expire in 2028.

Doku, who joined City from Rennes for £55.4 million in 2023, scored eight goals and recorded 14 assists in 47 appearances last season.

Phil Foden, Abdukodir Khusanov and Josko Gvardiol have all signed long-term deals this summer.

Meet Bhatia, the man behind deal to buy third of Liverpool

Former QPR chairman went through seven managers but knows what supporters want, writes **Paul Joyce**

The details of exactly when are somewhat sketchy but Amit Bhatia has already experienced a match day at Anfield.

Not in the boardroom rubbing shoulders with the elite, mind you. Instead he was to the side of the goal, his hopes rising and falling along with the rest of the visiting supporters during one away game in his lengthy association with Queens Park Rangers.

The British-Indian businessman leading the deal to buy a third of Liverpool does not possess the profile of his fellow syndicate members Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon, and Eduardo Saverin, the co-founder of Facebook. He is the one, however, with a background in English football.

Bhatia joined the board at Loftus Road in December 2007 as a representative of his father-in-law, Lakshmi Mittal, who bought a shareholding in the club alongside the Formula 1 grandees Bernie Ecclestone and Flavio Briatore. While those big personalities boasted expertise in the business side of sport, Bhatia initially focused exclusively on building links with supporters.

He was involved with the fan advisory board, supporters’ groups and was chairman of QPR in the Community Trust. It was through those connections that he is said to have developed an understanding of what football clubs mean to people, something that will soon be put to the test again.

The announcement last month that he was transferring his shareholding in QPR, a clear sign that the discussions to buy into Liverpool were progressing, produced something of a rarity in modern football. There were a slew of positive messages about Bhatia on social media rather than simply opprobrium.

This was despite Bhatia’s promotion to QPR chairman in August 2018 failing to bring on-field success — amid seven managerial changes, including the short-lived tenures of two former Liverpool academy coaches in Michael Beale and Neil Critchley — up to the present day.

Still, there were references about bumping into an elated Bhatia outside Wembley immediately after the Championship play-off final in 2014

Bhatia is part of a consortium that wants to buy 30 per cent of Liverpool

when Bobby Zamora’s goal downed Derby County and sealed a return to the top flight.

“He has a big grounding in football and in English football,” one source said. “And how English football fans see their clubs and what they want from them.”

That is going to be crucial in dealing with Liverpool fans who may be sceptical about the motives of exactly why a ludicrously wealthy consortium wants a large slice of a sporting institution.

One of Liverpool’s strengths is that they continue to be held to account by their fans, with structured engagement written directly into the club’s Articles of Association after the collapse of the European Super League plot in 2021.

Long before then, Fenway Sports Group (FSG) had benefited from that. The protests against former owners Tom Hicks and George Gillett played a part in the unravelling of their regime, which then allowed John W Henry and co to buy the club for £300 million in 2010.

The deal on the table now values Liverpool at £4.5 billion, with Bhatia and co investing £1.5 billion for a stake in the region of 30 per cent, and shows the growth that has followed on and off the pitch

As recently as April, however, FSG also fell foul of the scrutiny Liverpool supporters cast over Anfield.

Plans to increase general admission prices across three consecutive seasons prompted protests inside the ground organised by Spirit of Shankly (SOS). Soon after the plan, which would have raised an additional £1.5 million-£2 million a season, was scrapped.

In an attempt to understand a significant moment in Liverpool’s history, SOS has sought greater clarity on what the impact will be of Bhatia’s consortium coming on board. What will the purchasers get in return, for example, and is it part of a planned wider sale?

It would be remiss of Bhatia — given how he became rooted in football — not to strike up a line of communication with fans’ groups and the supporters’ board. Reaching out is essential.

While negotiations with FSG on the deal have been taking place for about three months, it is understood Bhatia, who studied economics at Cornell University, New York, and lives in London with his wife, Vanisha, and their three children, has spent time in their circle for more than a year.

He has been identified as someone with whom FSG wants to be in a strategic minority partnership.

A return for the investors will seemingly come from growing Liverpool more as a business, as the present owner has over the past 16 years, rather than in the short term.

At first glance Bhatia, whose company, AyBe Capital Advisers, owns a stake in the London Spirit cricket franchise in the Hundred, brings networks and expertise in India and Asia.

Brazilian entrepreneur Saverin has similar links in South America and the connections Bezos possesses come with Liverpool convinced they are already the biggest Premier League club in the United States.

GWI, the audience research company, points to Liverpool having 26 million supporters in the US and calculates that they have the fastest-growing fan base of any Premier League club in the country.

Given the Premier League and Uefa’s financial regulations on how spending is linked to turnover, the depth of the consortium’s financial might is not as important as its ability to open up new commercial opportunities. That is where the growth lies and an increase in annual revenue, which stands at £703 million, will allow more to be spent on the team.

Apple, for example, has collaborated with Real Madrid, with the club’s president, Florentino Pérez, describing Real’s “Infinite Bernabéu” virtual reality project as akin to “opening the stadium doors to the entire planet”. It is not difficult to envisage Amazon exploring similar opportunities in time.

Bhatia, 46, will be visible at Anfield should the deal go through, as seems likely. This time he will be in the boardroom, rather than behind the goal, but the start of the journey he has undertaken to this point should continue to shape his thinking.

Villa agree £17.1m move for Ruggeri

Charlotte Duncker

Aston Villa are set to sign the Atletico Madrid full back Matteo Ruggeri, with the defender due to undergo a medical.

A fee of £17.1 million has been agreed and it is understood the transfer should be completed in the coming days.

Villa are in the market for a left back after Lucas Digne returned to Paris Saint-Germain, while Ian Maatsen is not viewed as a first-choice option by Unai Emery.

Ruggeri, 24, signed for the Spanish side from Atalanta last summer and made 47 appearances.

Villa have also held talks over a deal for Aaron Wan-Bissaka as they look to provide competition for Matty Cash down the other flank. The West Ham United defender is under contract until 2031 but the Championship club would be open to selling him this summer.

Negotiations are continuing with Bayern Munich for the transfer of João Palhinha. The 31-year-old is understood to be open to a move to Villa Park but an agreement has yet to be reached with the Bundesliga side.

Despite signing Johan Manzambi and João Gomes this summer, Villa would still like to bring in Palhinha, especially with Amadou Onana out with a long-term anterior cruciate ligament injury, which he suffered while on duty with Belgium at the World Cup.

A forward is also on Emery’s wish list but Villa are likely to have to sell a player to be able to strengthen further up the pitch. Arsenal are interested in signing Ezri Konsa. However, they want to spend only about £45 million, below the £60 million Villa want.

Emery was asked about transfer plans after Aston Villa’s defeat in the Super Cup final. “There will be more changes,” he said.

Madjo cleared to play last week, page 60

Sport

No to summer rugby

Heatstroke tragedy reminds us sport needs safe conditions

Stuart Barnes, page 60

Mowbray back after cancer

Blackburn boss eyes promotion after his life-changing ordeal

Interview, page 61

SONA MALETEROVA/GETTY IMAGES

Sprint queen Hunt claims golden double

Matt Lawton
Chief Sports Correspondent

Amy Hunt won gold in the 200m final last night to complete the sprint double in Birmingham.

The 24-year-old, left, who had already taken 100m gold at these European Championships, stormed beyond her Great Britain team-mate Dina Asher-Smith down the straight to cross the line in 22.19sec.

Asher-Smith, 30, could not hold on and finished with the bronze, edged into third place by 0.01sec by Ireland's Rhasidat Adeleke.

"The 100m is the hardest mentally, the 200m is the hardest physically," Hunt said. "The 200m has been really scary; I've been fainting. I had to be brave. It was an amazing race. No celebrating, no champagne until Sunday night."

Hunt will also race in the mixed 4x100m and the women's 4x100m. Her double emulates the 2018 achievement of Asher-Smith.

Report, pages 58-59

Carrick: We need signings

United head coach 'delighted' with arrivals but wants left back and another central midfielder

Paul Hirst

Michael Carrick has told the Manchester United board that he wants to add more signings to his squad.

Although he stressed he was "delighted" with the arrivals of Youri Tielemans, Andrey Santos and Karl Darlow — and claimed that his team could achieve "something special" this season — the United head coach said that he still needed more new players.

"I think we've got a pretty good balance when you lay the squad out, but of course we would like more," Carrick said.

"We need to keep pushing for more. We keep looking. We want to improve, we need to improve. It's something that we're working towards."

United's £85 million outlay is modest compared with Manchester City, who could end up spending £300 million on three central midfielders, and Chelsea, who paid Aston Villa £117 million for Morgan Rogers.

Tottenham Hotspur spent £185 million on two of United's midfield targets, Mateus Fernandes and Sandro Tonali.

United want to sign a left back to lighten the load on Luke Shaw, and another central midfielder, as Casemiro has left on a free transfer and Manuel Ugarte has a long-term knee injury. United are more than £1 billion in debt. "To be honest, I haven't got the

Continued on page 62

Rahm doubt for Ryder Cup

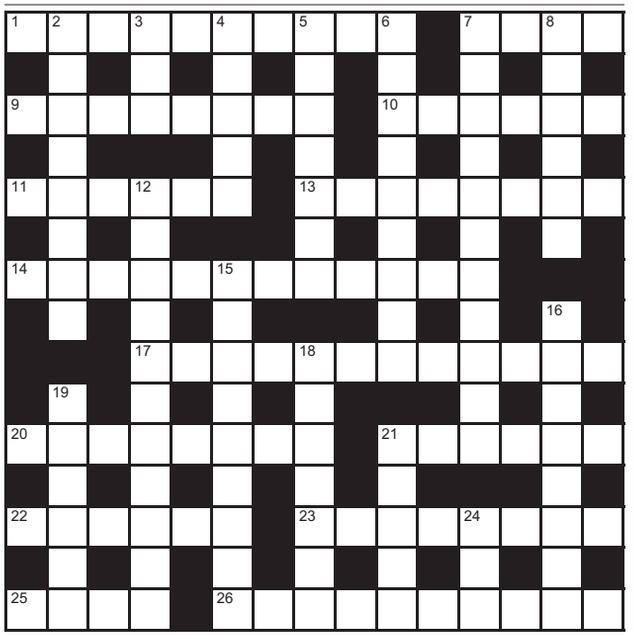
John Westerby, Tom Kershaw

Jon Rahm's participation in next year's Ryder Cup could be back in doubt after European Tour bosses hardened their stance against players committed to the rival LIV Golf circuit.

Rahm, 31, the world No 13 from Spain, agreed a deal in May that enabled him to play on the DP World Tour in return for paying fines of about £2 million, which seemed to have paved the way

Continued on page 59

Times Crossword 29,621



ACROSS

1 City function subsequently returned food (10)
7 Desire sex next to church (4)
9 Painter's second drink ending in disaster (8)
10 Go after South American's heavenly body (6)
11 One who's gone home, leaving home later than Charlie (6)
13 Slapdash stroke across second and third in Gleneagles (8)
14 Rogue helpers upset homeless person (5,7)
17 Lecturer collects a scrap item of old farmyard machinery (6,6)
20 Pursue around St Ives, primarily to rebuke (8)
21 Predecessor of King George IV rebuffed capital (6)
22 King and jack, perhaps, or two other high cards? (6)
23 French commune organised retrospective — good for them! (8)
25 Smackhead zealously guards cutting tool (4)
26 County snubbed very famous artist, possibly (10)

DOWN

2 Conservative dignitary uncovered old documents, reportedly (8)
3 Aspire to shorten first part of track and field event (3)
4 Only performs with new material (5)
5 Content of putrid, cold ulcer regularly ignored in part of ear (7)
6 Eatery harbours a penetrating germ on the counter (9)
7 Fanatical about volatile cleaner's bigotry (11)
8 Run into trees, and be unable to stop laughing (6)
12 Maybe circles princess in dance on ice? (6-5)
15 Sordid aspect of naval weapons close to Belarus (9)
16 Writes about square hills (8)
18 Former Queen Elizabeth's introduction confused a loner (7)
19 Protective equipment started to hold line (6)
21 Church official cut grass next to road (5)
24 Periodically used social lubricant (3)

Yesterday's solution 29,620

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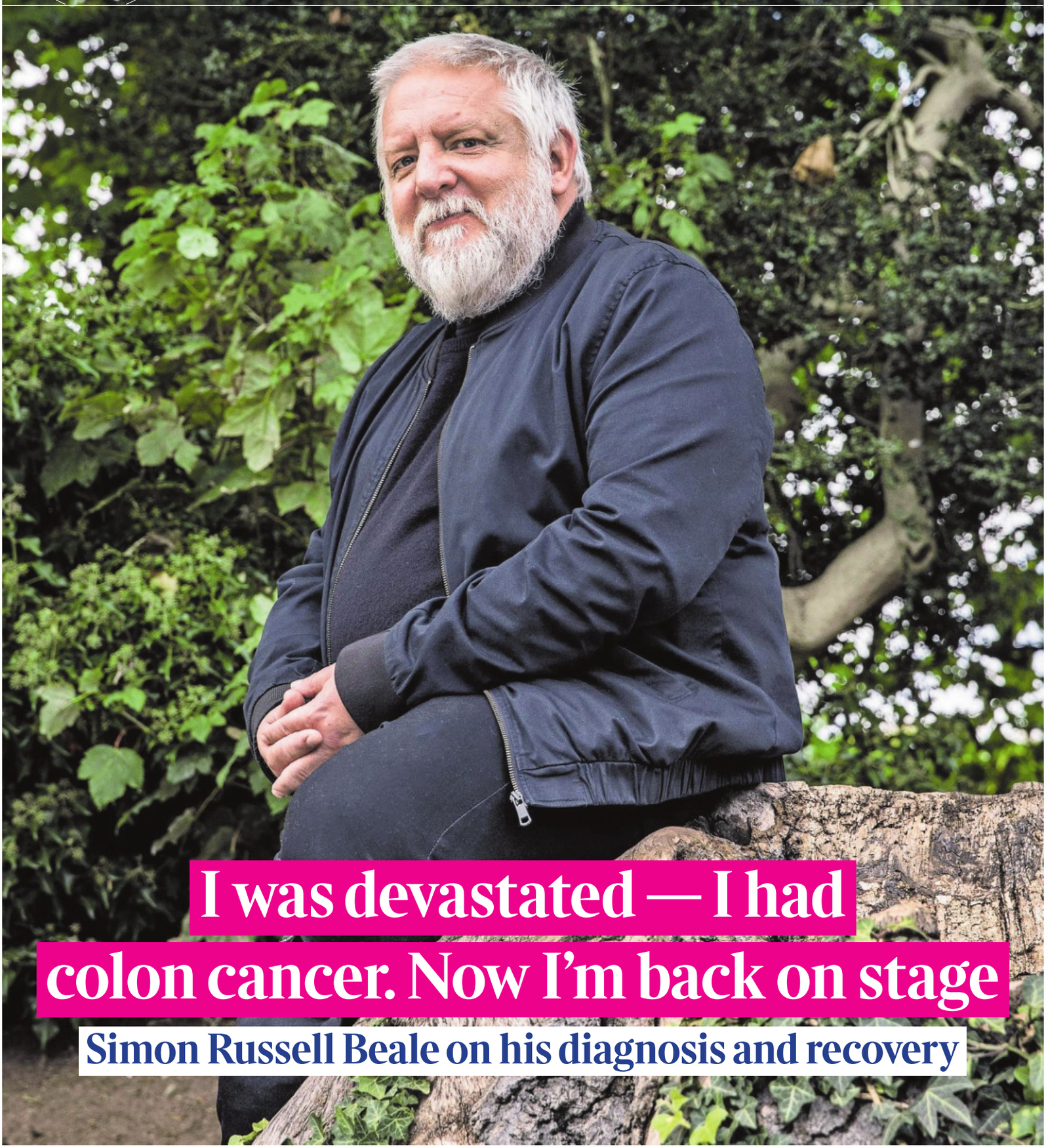
August 14 | 2026



I was devastated — I had colon cancer. Now I'm back on stage

Simon Russell Beale on his diagnosis and recovery

the arts column

Richard Morrison

Are we really going to abandon Jodrell Bank and the Eden Project?

It may seem odd to have an article in the arts section about the threat to Jodrell Bank Observatory and its giant Lovell Telescope. Yes, the proposal to stop a £2.8 million annual grant to Jodrell Bank from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) in March 2028 could end more than 80 years of pioneering research on that famous Cheshire site. But isn't a row about who gets science funding a bit too, well, scientific to interest us aesthetic types?

How you answer that depends on how you answer a bigger question. What constitutes a nation's culture? Is it just "cultural" things such as paintings and books, castles and orchestras, pop bands and movies? Or should it be defined more broadly to include the science, technology and industries that shape our society?

They, too, require vision and creativity. They also inspire. Why are so many musicians and artists campaigning to save Jodrell Bank? It's surely because that massive structure and its incredible history are as indelibly written into our cultural heritage as Shakespeare and Stonehenge. From Bernard Lovell's trailblazing efforts in 1945 to repurpose discarded military equipment to investigate cosmic rays (I love the story that he moved his work to Jodrell Bank because electrical interference from trams on the Oxford Road were affecting radio signals at the University of Manchester) right up to the observatory's continuing revelations of what's going on in distant galaxies, it's a gripping saga of discovery. And thanks to its excellent Centre for Engagement it is still enthralling 150,000 visitors a year, including 25,000 children on school trips — the astrophysicists of tomorrow.

It's probable that Jodrell Bank's public-facing operations would continue even if UKRI funding is withdrawn. After all, it's a Unesco world heritage site and the Lovell Telescope is grade I listed, so it's not going to be suddenly demolished. And the site is owned and run by the University of Manchester, which contributes £5.7 million to its budget each year, with the local authority (Cheshire East) chipping in another million. The threatened UKRI funding is specifically for the part the telescope plays in the e-Merlin radio astronomy network — and the allocation of that funding is all about scientific priorities, not public engagement.

Jodrell Bank's Lovell Telescope

Nevertheless, the concern over Jodrell Bank's future has brought to light another alarming matter. It's the general structural decline of Britain's science and discovery centres (SDCs). Jodrell Bank is one of 28 such centres around the country. These are independent charities doing vital work to ensure that science is accessible to all. They reach 5.2 million people each year, including 37 per cent of UK schools. So they play a central part in the drive to make Britain a science-literate, technically savvy, environmentally conscious nation.

You would think that a government as committed to Stem educational goals as this one is (and, under Andy Burnham, now apparently focused on equipping school-leavers with the technical skills employers need) would ensure that the 28 SDCs were properly funded. Nothing could be further from reality. According to the Association for Science and Discovery Centres, their members desperately need £20 million right now to do the most urgent infrastructure repairs, and £180 million over the next five years to sort out failing roofs, windows and heating systems in their ageing buildings. It's money they simply do not have, and the reason is exasperating.

Many were set up 25 years ago with one-off grants of lottery money by the Millennium Commission (remember that?). Since then they have been resourcefully entrepreneurial about covering their running costs. But infrastructure renewal is a different matter. If they were classed as museums they could apply for government and lottery grants. But they aren't. Nobody in government will take responsibility for them. When approached for funding the Department for Culture, Media and Sport said, in effect: "Sorry, you aren't cultural, try DSIT." But the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (now being renamed) said: "We don't have a budget for educational projects like this." And the Department for Education refused to engage with the SDCs at all.

> "There's no one in government they can beg for some help

This shameless buck-passing will do real damage to the public's engagement with science, no question. The SDCs are coping with all those price increases also faced by cultural institutions — soaring energy and labour costs particularly. But unlike museums and arts centres they have nobody in government they can beg for help. The consequences? Two of the most famous — the Eden Project in Cornwall and the Glasgow Science Centre, one of Scotland's biggest visitor attractions — have warned of substantial job cuts and growing deficits. And, privately, several other SDCs warn they will have to close completely within 18 months if they don't get help.

With all the concerns about climate change, artificial intelligence and future sources of energy we should be boosting the public's knowledge of science and technology, not jeopardising the very institutions that deliver it. For instance, 15 SDCs around Britain have just co-operated on an exhibition called *Demystifying AI*, which I think most of us could benefit from seeing.

But there's a bigger issue here that goes back to what I wrote at the start. Our national culture, in the broadest sense of the word, has been shaped at least as much by Britain's incredible breakthroughs in industry, science and technology as by what we have done in the realms of art, music and literature. So if we acknowledge the need for public funding to keep our museums, galleries and theatres in reasonable working order, why do we let the centres that celebrate and explain science fall into disrepair?

By all means let's save Jodrell Bank, but let's not stop there. There's a budget coming up in the autumn. If the science, culture and education departments can't agree whose responsibility it is to support our vital SDCs, the Treasury should directly authorise the funding for their urgent maintenance.

How Nicole Kidman reinvented herself at 59

Incognito in Ibiza, partying in Portofino, new man, new film, new look... Welcome to the star's third act. By Harriet Walker

Pick up the latest copy of Vogue and you'll find that Nicole Kidman is experimenting with not looking like herself any more. If at any point this summer you have been in Ibiza and noticed a tall woman with short hair dancing next to you, chances are it was her. In the latest issue of the fashion bible the 59-year-old Aussie megastar admits to putting on a "little dark wig" and sunglasses to hit the island's all-night-long clubs incognito.

"I need it," she tells the magazine — and other midlife rave mums will understand exactly why. Weeks after Madonna, 67, released an album about "creating a new persona" on the dancefloor, the escapism available there seems to be at the heart of Kidman's reinvention too. She also ended up inadvertently dancing on stage in Portofino this summer, she admits, as well as taking in *The Oresteia* in London, a timeless tale of — among other things — a woman in midlife ending a marriage on her own terms.

Kidman is the latest glowing example of a trend one may call the third-chapter womanaissance. Not quite 12 months after announcing the end of her 19-year marriage to the singer Keith Urban, Kidman is the fresh-faced cover star of Vogue's hallowed September issue this year.

"I had a different view of what my life was going to be. But this is what it is now," she says. "The future, it's completely unknown to me right now."

Last month Kidman was also snapped by paparazzi being picked up from a Los Angeles airport by the man rumoured to be her new beau, Michael Reinstein, thereby ticking off another of this summer's biggest trends: a private equity boyfriend.

New film, new man, new look. On the front of Vogue Kidman is wearing a rugby shirt, *Rivals* hair and the expression of a woman who has gained 20 years of her life back.

In more ways than are available to mere mortals, she has. Last October Kidman was announced as a Chanel brand ambassador once more, two decades after Karl Lagerfeld picked her to star in his Baz Luhrmann-directed No 5 adverts. Next month there's the release of a sequel to the 1998 film *Practical Magic*, in which she reprises her sisterly turn with Sandra Bullock, 62, who says the whole thing felt "as though no time has passed at all".

Hollywood women, and increasingly its men too, are expert at stopping the clock — even turning it back. Not only is Kidman showcasing the sort of newly plumped collagen the rest of us are supposed to assimilate without mentioning, according to Vogue she even smells the same now as she did decades ago. Her perfume is a "secret mix" she has started wearing again recently for the first time since her twenties. In fact, beyond the existence of the two daughters Kidman had with

VENETIA SCOTT/VOGUE

Urban, Sunday Rose, 18, and Faith, 15, there is little sign of the intervening decades at all — practical magic indeed.

In that time, though, Kidman has done much of the work that has made her an A-list power broker, having pledged in 2017 to work with a female director every 18 months to even the playing field. She has, over the past decade, fairly made the lucrative genre of glossy TV thrillers her own in shows such as *Big Little Lies*, *The Undoing* and *The Perfect Couple*, all of which went through her own Blossom production company. This year marked her debut as the detective Kay Scarpetta on Prime Video. Kidman has now been one of the best-paid and most well-known actresses for so long that she has little memory of life before fame. "My memory of it not being that is quite blurry, because I was really young," she tells Vogue.

"Because of who I married at such a young age, I was thrust into it since I was 22," she says in reference to her first husband, Tom Cruise, from whom she separated in 2001. "We just fell madly in love... [but] then I was his 'wife'."

She refers to a sense of having thrown her career away for that marriage, but the Nicole Kidman back catalogue is proof not only of correcting its course but of her impressive work ethic.

"She's one of our last truly legendary movie stars," Gen Z's favourite singer Charli XCX tells Vogue by text, having made friends with Kidman after the actress attended one of her shows.

Nicole Kidman in the September issue of British Vogue, left, out on August 20 and available for digital download. Below: Michael Reinstein

"She has the expression of a woman who gained 20 years of her life back

(Younger "going-out friends" are a key plank of the womanaissance.)

Kidman also admits in the interview that she first learnt the art of reinvention from drag artists.

"I used to go to trans clubs," she says. "I would sit down as a little freckled-faced red-headed girl and they... would do my lashes... put hairpieces on me and... make me beautiful."

It was the Dior couture gown she wore to the 1997 Oscars — chartreuse, chinoiserie, created by John Galliano — that first put Kidman on the fashion map, aged 29. The doyenne Joan Rivers might have called it "ugly" live on air, yet this was a formative moment, not just for Kidman but for the industry too. This first instance of Paris couture on the red carpet created a pipeline between fashion's most haute catwalks with Hollywood's own runway, practically inventing the concept of celebrity as we know it.

Kidman's latest "viral moment" came last October, a week after the announcement that she and Urban were separating, when she arrived at the new Chanel designer Matthieu Blazy's debut show in Paris. This time she was in nothing more fussy than a man's white shirt and pale blue jeans — a new look by the label so hot off the catwalk it hadn't even appeared there yet. With Kidman were both of her daughters.

"These kids, that's what we drop everything for," Kidman says in Vogue. "I have had so many older women in my life who were incredible mentors — I know who I am."

Just don't be surprised if you don't, should you bump into her on the dancefloor.

The naked dip that did Kate Moss no good at all

She launched her wellness brand Cosmoss with a splash. It sank. By Charlie Gowans

I would have thought Kate Moss could sell pretty much anything to the Gen X and millennial British women — myself included — who have spent the past three decades copying her every outfit. But despite the literal splash made in 2022 when she announced the launch of her wellness brand, Cosmoss, with a video of her wild swimming in the nude, last year the company folded. Now, thanks to the liquidator's report, we know it was £2.9 million in debt.

So what went wrong? The celebrity brand bubble certainly hasn't popped: we buy our undies from Kim Kardashian's Skims, our designer clothes from The Row by the Olsen twins and our make-up from Rihanna's Fenty Beauty — all brands worth more than $1 billion. But when it comes to wellness, an industry worth £5 trillion, it's a different story — that of the curse of the celebrity wellness brand.

Rosie Huntington-Whiteley founded Rose Inc in 2018; her cruelty-free, vegan beauty products launched at Space NK in 2021. Her joint venture partner Amyris went bankrupt in 2023 and the brand was sold at auction for $2.5 million, with Huntington-Whiteley no longer attached to it.

Holly Willoughby launched Wylde Moon in September 2021 (the date chosen to coincide with the harvest moon). By 2022 her candles, perfume and diffusers were stocked in Harrods. In 2023 the brand recorded £149 in assets after deductions to creditors; it's still trading online but is off the Harrods website.

Both women have an ability to drive sales. When Willoughby began to share the high street outfits she wore to host *This Morning* and *I'm a Celebrity...* on her Instagram the clothes sold out so quickly it was called the "Holly effect", her ability to influence shopping trends second only to that of the Princess of Wales (the "Kate effect"). When Huntington-Whiteley's lingerie collaboration with Marks & Spencer launched in 2012 it was the brand's fastest-selling lingerie collection, selling 600,000 units in the first year. A decade on, M&S was selling a Rosie item every 30 seconds and had reached a milestone of five million bras.

As for Moss — well, hers was the original Kate effect. Everything she wore — Alexander McQueen scarves, Hunter wellies at Glastonbury, her collaboration with Topshop — became the next big thing. But wellness was too hard a sell, probably because even if that is Moss's lifestyle now, it's not the one she's famous for. In the Noughties she was forever pictured with a cigarette and a Diet Coke (she became the creative director of the latter in 2022).

So whether or not Moss now begins her day with a Cosmoss Dawn tea — hibiscus and ginger root to waken the senses — or ends with the chamomile and butterfly pea flower Dusk tea (£20 each), she's not the woman we'd buy them from. I'd trust Moss's fashion opinion any day, but if I'm looking for a wellness regime I want a woman who has lived and breathed that life, and probably has had a lot less fun.

Which is perhaps why Gwyneth Paltrow's Goop is still going, and was valued at $433 million by PitchBook in 2024. Paltrow documents the Goop life on her social media, hosting make-up-free dinner parties, following a regime of Tracy Anderson workouts and intermittent fasting.

Of course, her fame is the biggest selling point, but when Paltrow is quoted talking about her love of an early-bird 5.30pm dinner to aid digestion, we can well believe it. I saw her seemingly hungover once, after she flew in for a talk on "Goop Cruise" the week she was celebrating her 50th birthday in Italy: she was drinking green juice to recover.

"I started meditating every day, doing transcendental meditation, wild swimming... I tried everything [new]," Moss told her old friend Rosemary Ferguson for a Vogue feature to launch Cosmoss in 2022. Perhaps it's unfair for us to hold on to the "old" Kate, not let her evolve, to expect her to sell us party dresses at 52 (although she is, with Zara).

Kate Moss

Kate Moss the woman may have changed but Kate Moss the legend remains. Perhaps it's a compliment — we think she's too cool to really be getting a full eight hours of sleep.

As the news breaks, Moss is on her annual holiday on a boat in Ibiza, carrying £50,000+ of Hermès bags, a Birkin on one shoulder, a Kelly on the other. Last year she was photographed using the Kelly as a beach bag, which is just the sort of rock-and-roll irreverence we expect from Moss.

As one celebrity brand is shuttered, another pops up: Harper Beckham's Harlo by Harper beauty empire is coming soon, bringing us the wealth of experience and business expertise that comes with being the 15-year-old daughter of Posh and Becks.

cover story

‘I feel fine, I feel normal. People have been really nice and kind’

Last year Simon Russell Beale pulled out of an RSC play due to cancer. Now he’s playing Winston Churchill on screen and Liberace on stage. He talks to Ed Potton

Simon Russell Beale has just played Winston Churchill in two epic French films about Charles de Gaulle, the first of which, *De Gaulle: Résistance*, is out this month, followed by *De Gaulle: Liberté* in September. “I believe it’s quite a big performance,” he says with a chuckle. Physically as well as tonally. Churchill was portlier than Beale is — did he wear padding? “Oh no, I was big then. I’ve had cancer so I’ve lost a lot of weight.”

Beale was diagnosed with colon cancer last year, which forced him to pull out of playing Titus Andronicus for the Royal Shakespeare Company in September. He is about to start his ninth and hopefully last month of chemotherapy. Openness about his illness has served him well. “I thought, I’ll just tell everybody, because then people are really nice and kind. Attitudes have changed.”

He announced it in April. “The Times published the story in the same week as my father’s obituary. Isn’t that weird?” His father, Sir Peter Beale, was a distinguished army doctor who was surgeon-general of the British Armed Forces from 1991-94.

It has been a tough year then for Beale, 65, but he looks great: tanned, slim and simmering with ideas. “I feel fine. I feel normal,” he says, sitting in the kitchen of his flat in London, where he lives alone. He comes from a family of doctors so he had plenty of good medical advice, and his father lived to 92, which is a good sign.

Right: Simon Russell Beale and as Winston Churchill in De Gaulle: Résistance

> “Churchill is the fate of any slightly overweight English actor

***De Gaulle: Résistance* is in cinemas from Aug 28; *I’ll Be Seeing You*, Pitlochry Festival Theatre, Scotland, Sep 22 to Oct 11**

Has the chemo affected his stamina? “We’ll see next week,” he says. That’s when he starts rehearsals for a new play, *I’ll Be Seeing You*, in which he plays Liberace. More on that later. “Obviously I had to drop out of *Titus*... you think it wouldn’t matter that much, but it does.” In 1993 he had to withdraw from playing Richard III for Sam Mendes after slipping a disc in his back doing the famous hunch. “I remember thinking at the time, ‘It won’t matter.’ I was absolutely devastated.”

The winner of three Oliviers, two Baftas and a Tony, Beale is rivalled only by Mark Rylance as the leading Shakespearean actor of his generation. He was a chilling Iago in *Othello* (1997), a bookish Dane in *Hamlet* (2000) and a haunting Prospero in *The Tempest* (2016). Born in Malaysia, where his dad was stationed, he went to boarding school in Bristol before Cambridge and had his breakthrough in 1991 as Konstantin in an RSC production of Chekhov’s *The Seagull*.

We have met before, at a movie junket in 2017 for *The Death of Stalin*, in which Beale played Lavrentiy Beria, the terrifying head of the Soviet secret police. “Most theatre people would love to do films,” he said then. He has been on the big screen a lot in recent years, playing an airy Edward Elgar in *The Choral*, an indolent Dionysus in *Thor: Love and Thunder* and an interfering toff in *Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale*.

Now he is giving us, for the third time, his Churchill. A big-budget, *Darkest Hour*-style production, the first *De Gaulle* film shows the exiled general, played by Simon Abkarian, arriving virtually alone in London and founding the Free France movement despite having no political experience. Churchill is bemused but impressed by his quixotic chutzpah.

Beale first played Churchill in *Dunkirk* — not the Christopher Nolan film but a Bafta-winning TV docudrama — in 2004, then in the wartime spy romp *Operation Mincemeat* in 2021. The role, he says, “is the fate of anybody slightly overweight who’s English”. Not just English — as well as Gary Oldman, Albert Finney and Michael Gambon, Churchill has been portrayed by a Scot (Brian Cox), an Irishman (Brendan Gleeson) and an American (John Lithgow). Churchill has become like King Lear: a rite of passage for an actor of a certain age and gravitas. Beale has played Lear too, of course, for Mendes in 2014, to predictable acclaim.

A good chunk of his performance in *De Gaulle* is in French, including most of his interactions with the general, who didn’t speak much English. Churchill’s French was typical of an upper-class man of his era: “Good and conversational but with an irremovable English accent. If he couldn’t think of something he’d just make up a French word.”

Beale, who once taught himself ancient Greek for fun, relished the intellectual challenge of acting in French. “I went into overdrive: the wardrobe people had to speak to me in French, but that lasted about five minutes because I didn’t know the words for ‘these are the wrong trousers’.”

“It’s not that he was speaking perfect French before, but he’s a fast learner,” says Antonin Baudry, the French diplomat turned film-maker who directed *De Gaulle*. Some actors learn

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foreign dialogue phonetically but Beale "was aware of every connotation of every word".

"The trouble about that is my vanity," Beale says. "There was one sentence and, me being really pompous, I said he would use the subjunctive. But actually French people, like us, don't use the subjunctive very necessarily. Antonin said, 'OK.'

"I said, 'I know it's awful but I want people to think that I can actually speak French.'"

"He has the energy of a beast inside," Baudry says. "He acts with his body as much as he does with his eyes and his mind in a way that is stunning." Well, quite. Beale peppers our conversation with wide-eyed stares and conspiratorial glances that invite you into a private world. He is erudite and witty in a way that fools you into thinking you're the same.

Above all he is curious. Preparing for *Dunkirk*, he had tea with Mary Soames, Churchill's daughter. "She would say, 'You know, I was there with him on VE Day.' She said he wore a wedding ring. My grandfather wouldn't have worn one so it's quite a louche decision." That ties in with the wardrobe for the *De Gaulle* films, which included maroon dungarees and an embroidered waistcoat. "The costume designer thought he was a bit of a dandy. I thought, 'This is not the Churchill I remember!'"

His Churchill in the new films blends ruthlessness — as in the scene where he orders the destruction of the French fleet to avoid it being used against Britain — with compassion and humour, plus those flamboyant flourishes. His Churchills in *Dunkirk* and *Operation Mincemeat* were praised respectively as intense and gruff, although Baudry says he wasn't bowled over by them when I speak to him separately. "I didn't know how to talk to him about it!" he says. "It wasn't his fault, obviously [Baudry blames the script and direction]. When Simon said, 'I'd be happy to do Churchill because I was not happy with the two I did,' I was like, 'Oh, thank God!'"

"That isn't true, actually," Beale says of being unhappy with those performances, before admitting, "I'm never happy. That's part of the reason it takes ages for me to actually watch the films." This Churchill is certainly more fleshed out, especially when drinking brandy and singing in French with De Gaulle. "Churchill was puzzled and admiring and infuriated by him," he says. It mirrors Britain and France then. "Yeah, it probably does."

Having shot *De Gaulle*, Beale swapped real-life politics for Westeros in the *Game of Thrones* spin-off series *House of the Dragon*, playing the nobleman Ser Simon Strong. He hadn't seen *Game of Thrones* so he binge-watched it. "And actually *Game of Thrones* is completely addictive. It has that Shakespeare structure." Spoiler ahoy. His hook for Ser Simon was that the character has "absolutely no desire to be involved with this nonsense". He was unceremoniously bumped off a few episodes ago with a sword to the gut. I tell him I was hoping his death would be more elaborate. "I was hoping it would be a bit later," he says.

The work keeps coming though. He is writing a book of essays, and in September will play Liberace in *I'll Be Seeing You*, a surreal new play by Martin Sherman, directed by Alan Cumming, at Pitlochry Festival Theatre. It imagines conversations between the jewel-encrusted musician and a writer working on a play about him. He has nailed the voice, slipping into a camp American drawl: "Liberace speaks very slowly and very nasally. What's lovely about it is he's not a great dancer but he has to dance, he's not a great singer but he'll have to sing, and obviously he has to play the piano."

Singing should be fine: Beale was a chorister at St Paul's as a boy and studied singing at Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He plays the piano too, and did so on stage as Johann Sebastian Bach in *Bach & Sons* in 2021. Will he play in *I'll be Seeing You*? He gives a dramatic pause and smiles archly. "I can't play like Liberace." So he'll be miming this time.

It seems a bold role for him, and you wonder if the choice was affected by his cancer: a sense of mortality fuelling bravado. It turns out he had agreed to play Liberace before he became ill. "But it was a bit of going, 'I've just done *Titus Andronicus* — I'm going to do Liberace, of course!' That's part of the delight of my job."

Beale has been working throughout his chemotherapy, narrating an acclaimed puppet version of Shakespeare's poem *Venus and Adonis* this year. It went to Romania, so he had to travel back and forth for his treatment in the UK while wearing a temporary stoma bag. "They put a pump on you at the end of each chemo session," he says. "But they said, 'You can't fly with a pump because of the air pressure.' The whole thing has been about logistics. I refuse to face the other possibilities."

His schedule is defiantly busy. He has just narrated the audiobook of Robert Harris's new novel, *Agrippa*, and plays a barrister in *Prima Facie*, a forthcoming film of the Olivier-winning play about the legal system and sexual assault, with Cynthia Erivo taking over the role played on stage by Jodie Comer. In February he stars opposite Rupert Everett in Harold Pinter's *No Man's Land*, directed by Patrick Marber. "I don't know Rupert, and then we had a reading," he says. "God, he's enchanting company." You can bet that Everett said the same thing about him..

Do we really need a Barbie sequel?

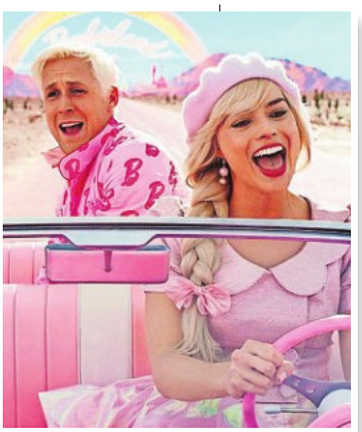
As reports suggest the film's stars won't sign up to a follow-up, Sarah Ditum says one perfect film was enough

Is the *Barbie* sequel headed to the big toybox in the sky? Three years ago *Barbie* was a cinematic phenomenon — and a commercial megahit. The film became the biggest earner in Warner Bros history, making more than $1.4 billion in worldwide box office. Which, by the normal rules of Hollywood, should guarantee a follow-up.

However, according to reports in The New York Times and Variety, Warner Bros is stalling while the film's key personnel hold out for a hefty payday. A hard deadline looms: if nothing is signed by December, rights to Barbie revert to the toy manufacturer Mattel and the whole project will have to be restarted from scratch.

That would mean no Margot Robbie as Barbie: who else has the mix of doll-perfect looks and acting chops to take the role? It would mean no Ken played by Ryan Gosling, whose incredible commitment to the part — both in the film and on the publicity trail — is one of the marvels of modern cinema. And it would mean no Greta Gerwig as director and writer.

Usually the contracts for a tentpole film such as *Barbie* include commitments to a sequel. *Barbie*, however, was a risk for Warner Bros — albeit a gamble that paid off.



Ryan Gosling and Margot Robbie as Ken and Barbie in the 2023 film

"Barbie needs Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling more than they need Barbie

When I went to see Barbie I got a pink Barbie manicure for the occasion. I saw women at my screening dressed in full Barbie outfits, with glossy blow-outs. Barbie was a perfect pop-culture event.

Some judged the film lightweight, though what do you expect from a comedy movie about a fashion doll? Some accused it of faux-feminism, but America Ferrera's monologue about the conflicting demands on women hit unexpectedly hard. Meanwhile, the existential angst of Gosling's Ken said more about the masculinity crisis than a hundred overwrought essays.

The question is whether a sequel can recapture that magic. A recent effort to do Barbie-for-boys with the *Masters of the Universe* film (another Mattel property) flopped at the box office, taking just $114 million worldwide on a rumoured $170-$200 million budget. Gerwig and her co-writer (and husband) Noah Baumbach say they have a story, but neither is naturally the franchise type: if they do this, you can see why they would want it to make financial sense. Meanwhile, Robbie and Gosling are hardly short of work offers. *Barbie* needs them more than they need *Barbie*.

Perhaps it's right for *Barbie II* to remain shrink-wrapped on the shelf. The moral of the first film was that you can't live in the Dreamhouse for ever: even Barbie has to confront mortality in the end. We got one perfect playtime, and maybe that's all that we can ask.

THE CRITICS

This hilarious upper-class comedy is Saltburn on speed

Sian Clifford plays a loopy aristocrat in a fabulous mockumentary. By Kevin Maher

Sian Clifford excels as the eccentric Lady Isabella Ravenhyde

Finally a movie for anybody who watched all 12 episodes of Phoebe Waller-Bridge's *Fleabag* and thought, "Yes, it's good, but shouldn't the sister have her own thing?" Step forward, Sian Clifford, aka *Fleabag*'s Claire, who has been granted a fabulously unhinged comedy showcase.

She plays Lady Isabella Ravenhyde, the deranged chatelaine of the grand Ravenhyde Estate in Norfolk (actually Somerleyton Hall in Suffolk), in this consistently funny, frequently hilarious mockumentary about class prejudice, creative expression and the importance of being seen.

Saltburn reimagined or *Downtown Abbey* on amphetamines are the reference points as Lady Isabella invites a Netflix documentary crew into her home and, within minutes, is guzzling cocktails and announcing that she's "the aristocracy's answer to the Kardashians". She is also the hostess and lead contestant of her own crackpot talent contest, Stately Stars.

There is plenty of David Brent in the witty screenplay by the debut feature writer-director Samuel Abrahams. There are bits of Alan Partridge too, and a dash of *This Country*.

The twist, however, is where it suddenly segues into science fiction. Early in the first act (not a spoiler), Isabella begins to disappear. The hands go first (very Marty McFly in *Back to the Future*), then the shins. There are obvious metaphorical resonances, Abrahams duly suggesting that Isabella has become invisible to her husband, her peers and herself. But the ingenuity of the film and the power of Clifford's achingly sad performance mean that Isabella's condition becomes a sympathetic character trait, not merely a narrative gimmick.

It is almost unbearably poignant that Isabella's primary demand of her shifty director, Sam (Laurie Kynaston), is that he should never stop filming her, as if being seen on camera will rescue her from existential despair. By becoming transparent she loses her one chance at happiness. Or does she? There is a latent rom-com in *Lady* too, about a journalist falling for his subject.

Not everything works, though. Sam is an undercooked character with a weak personal arc. Still, the movie has buckets of style and a higher gag-per-minute ratio than most Hollywood comedies. And it remains, most importantly, a chance to see Clifford gloriously unleashed. This year's *Ballad of Wallis Island*? Probably.

In cinemas

Lady

15, 95min

★★★★☆

the classic film

The Pirates! (2012)

U, 88min

★★★★☆

Sailing back into cinemas as part of the studio's 50th anniversary celebrations, *The Pirates! In an Adventure with Scientists!* is one of Aardman Animations' most underrated gems. Hugh Grant makes his first and only animated film appearance voicing a Victorian pirate captain. Armed with a luxuriant beard and an unsquishable sense of optimism, the Captain is determined, against all odds, to win pirate of the year. His chances improve when Charles Darwin (David Tennant) reveals that his beloved fat blue "parrot", Polly, is in fact the world's last surviving dodo.

The Pirates! blended computer-generated effects — chiefly sea and backgrounds — into the stop-motion, but these never swamp the latter's tactile pleasures: every beard and tiny background joke feels meticulously fussed-over.

Gideon Defoe's script, adapted from his own children's book, eschews dumbed-down piratical clichés. As the Captain's deputy (Martin Freeman) say, "You can't just put arrr at the end of a sentence and expect everything to be all right." Here the kiddie-friendly action is awash with left-field adult humour and proudly British references to custard creams and Blue Peter badges. **LI-Z**

In cinemas and on ITVX

The Captain swings into action

Sunny Dancer

15, 106min

★★★☆☆

Bella Ramsey and Daniel Quinn-Toye play teens at a summer camp

Teen audiences can smell cringe a mile off. However, this teens-with-cancer dramedy has an irresistible whiff of authenticity. *The Last of Us* star Bella Ramsey plays Ivy, a 17-year-old leukaemia survivor struggling to reconnect with her old friends and everyday life. Her worried parents (Jessica Gunning and James Norton) pack her off to what Ivy dubs "chemo camp", an American-style summer camp in Scotland run by Neil Patrick Harris (excellent).

Ivy, "stubborn as a stuck zip", is initially mutinous, bristling at the camp's relentlessly inspirational ethos. Things look sunnier once she falls in with a gang of misfits who bunk off, neck vodka, start fights and fumble their way believably through first sex and first love.

Ruby Stokes is Ivy's horny room-mate; Earl Cave (son of the musician Nick) plays the rebel Ralph, alongside Jasmine Elcock, Conrad Khan (you always want more of him) and dreamy Daniel Quinn-Toye.

The result is winningly intimate and naturalistic. Even Ivy wouldn't roll her eyes too hard at its positivity. Ramsey is the standout, tapping an honest vein in every scene. No wonder that whenever the 25-year-old writer-director George Jaques is in doubt he pushes the camera closer to Ramsey's face.

The story's contrived climax left me dry-eyed, but overall *Sunny Dancer* lands sunny side up. **LI-Z**

In cinemas

Don't Say Good Luck

12, 110min

★★☆☆☆

The latest unabashed nepo project from Adam Sandler's Happy Madison Productions is another glossy Netflix showcase for his 17-year-old daughter, Sunny Sandler. Sophie Birenbaum (Sunny) is a mildly anxious theatre kid whose greatest worry is preparing for the lead in her school musical, *Waitress*, and whether she'll get to kiss the cute boy playing the gynaecologist. Then, on audition day, Sophie learns that her mother's cancer has returned. Should she still do the show?

Sunny made her screen debut aged one in *Grown Ups*, alongside her dad, and her CV has been chock-full of family-related credits ever since, most notably *You Are So Not Invited to My Bat Mitzvah*, a 2023 coming-of-age comedy co-starring her parents and her sister, Sadie.

Sunny really does have that elusive "it". She has an engaging softness and appealingly unforced quality that lights up the screen. Melanie Lynskey (*Yellowjackets*) is the standout as Sophie's mother, while Bebe Neuwirth and Steve Buscemi amuse as her interfering grandparents.

At times this film has the eager, sincere quality of a student play, but when heavier dramatic lifting is required it falls short. It's almost as if Sandler wants to spare his daughter pain. Even cancer arrives wearing kid gloves. Still, hating *Don't Say Good Luck* would be like kicking a kitten.

At one point Sophie's father watches her sing her heart out on stage and wipes away a proud tear. One can picture Sandler doing the same. **LI-Z**

Netflix

BOB GRUEN

Antonio Banderas, Dominic Sessa and Leo Woodall

The Bear without the angst

the big film

A biopic of the early years of the hard-living chef Anthony Bourdain is surprisingly upbeat, says Larushka Ivan-Zadeh

You would expect a biopic of a celebrity chef to get you drooling. "You'll want a plate of oysters after this!" the host at my screening promised. She was wrong. Which feels right. Because, despite becoming the bad-boy rock star of the foodie world, Anthony Bourdain never saw himself as a celebrity chef. What made his mouth water was the camaraderie.

Tony follows the recent prestige-biopic trend (*A Complete Unknown, Springsteen: Deliver Me from Nowhere)* of serving one choice formative morsel rather than the full cradle-to-grave smorgasbord. Drawn from the early chapters of Bourdain's cult 2000 memoir *Kitchen Confidential*, the film introduces us to Tony (played by Dominic Sessa), as he was then known, aged 19, long before global fame hit.

Privileged, middle-class and strutting around the student bar with nunchucks tucked into his trousers, Tony has no intention of becoming a chef. He wants to be a writer — George Orwell meets Jack Kerouac. Ah, the nostalgia for a time when cool kids wanted to be writers not influencers.

After lying to his parents about landing a prestigious college writing fellowship he follows his girlfriend Nancy (Emilia Jones) to Provincetown, Massachusetts. Broke, homeless, armed with *On the Road* and seemingly a single pair of Y-fronts, he ends up washing dishes at a grimy seafood joint run by Antonio Banderas. The Spanish actor's Ciro brings a lovely warmth as the paternal mentor who turns an unsaintly blind eye to his crew's outrageous exploits.

There, Tony is awestruck by the swaggering older men of the kitchen. Chief among them is cocksure, coke-snorting Sal (a charismatic Leo Woodall), who takes him under his wing and teaches him to shuck an oyster and pull a girl — often at the same time — and behave appallingly.

This was an era before toxic masculinity was a thing, and, like Bourdain's book, *Tony* romanticises the macho kitchen culture. Hazing, bare-handed hot pans, drugs, verbal and physical abuse: it's all treated as robust joshing. But Tony had not only stumbled into his tribe, he had found discipline, purpose and, crucially, the raw ingredients for his book.

As he later wrote in *Kitchen Confidential*, "I was — to be frank — a spoiled, miserable, narcissistic and thoughtless young lout, badly in need of an ass-kicking."

A darker undertow arrives when Sal introduces him to heroin. For viewers aware of Bourdain's later addiction and self-destructive streak the warning lights flash — particularly knowing that he would die by suicide in 2018, aged 61. But the director Matt Johnson wisely doesn't overseason the foreshadowing.

For the most part this is a rollicking, surprisingly sunny coming-of-age story. Picture *The Bear* with less angst and more innocence — a TV phenomenon that owes Bourdain a much acknowledged debt.

Johnson bottles something of the blistering, sizzling energy of *Kitchen Confidential*'s prose while, perhaps more impressively, giving the film an identity of its own. And where so many biopics leave you watching an actor straining to impersonate someone famous, *Tony* feels like the arrival of a star.

Sessa won acclaim for *The Holdovers*, where he played another precocious, rebellious teenager with an older mentor. Here, his Chalametesque black curls, gangling physique and young-Pacino eyes help, but this is no impersonation. He nails Bourdain's annoying young Turk braggadocio while letting you glimpse the unformed vulnerability, the uncertainty, even innocence underneath.

Only the redemption arc feels a little too pat, folding this chaotic mould-breaker rather too cleanly into a Hollywood mould. Still, this portrait of the artist as a young pot-washer is spicy, salty and just sweet enough. I'd happily have second helpings.

In cinemas

Tony
15, 106min
★★★★☆

The End of Oak Street
12A, 99min
★★★★☆

A summer blockbuster wherein an American family are chased by dinosaurs ticks an obvious *Jurassic Park*-sized box. And while the Spielbergian force is strong with *The End of Oak Street*, its loving homage to 1980s suburbia has its own darker "off" tone.

It's an ordinary summer in 1982 when the Platt family, led by Ewan McGregor and Anne Hathaway, are woken by a weird bright light. Next morning, for reasons never entirely explained, their neighbourhood has been transported 200 million years into the past. Cue dinosaurs.

Anne Hathaway

Lots and lots of them. Mostly unfriendly. Yet even before the chomping starts, the Platts are under threat from within. Hathaway gives it her all as a desperate housewife eaten away by a secret desire to become a writer and ditch her brood and loser husband (McGregor is miscast), who barely conceals his drinking. It's her job to hold everyone together when the children ask: "Mom, is it the end of the world?"

It is produced by the *Lost* creator JJ Abrams, and marks David Robert Mitchell's big-screen return after *Under the Silver Lake*. You sense a darker, stranger film scrabbling to escape. Instead, it's an entertaining, prehistoric storm in a teacup. But it more than delivers on the intense dino thrills. **LI-Z**

In cinemas

Holy Days
12A, 101min
★★★☆☆

There's always room for another feelgood movie to plonk the family in front of during the summer holidays. Shot against a typically staggering New Zealand backdrop, this one throws in some pretty travel porn too.

Adapted from Joy Cowley's novel, set in 1974, *Holy Days* centres on a dilapidated rural convent threatened with closure. Three elderly nuns, self-described "last of the dinosaurs", set off on a road trip vowing to save it, taking along a grieving young boy (the adorably mop-haired newcomer Elijah Tamati), whose late mother was once one of their convent girls, which provides cross-generational comedy.

The veteran Australian actress Judy Davis puts in a good turn as the stern, cigarette-puffing Sister Agnes — the kind of tough old bird (with a soft centre) Maggie Smith once made her own. Jacki Weaver (*Animal Kingdom*) plays sweetly against type as the nervy, goodie-two-shoes Sister Mary Clare, while Miriam Margolyes is very much on brand as the fruity, increasingly forgetful Sister Luke.

The actor-turned-director Nat Boltt mostly resists squeezing every last gag from the supposedly hilarious spectacle of nuns doing normal things. Mortality, grief, abandonment, anger and dementia are touched on, but only in a way that's cosily reassuring, while the plot fits together as neatly as a children's jigsaw puzzle. Sentimental in the nicest sense, it is kind-hearted, undemanding and entirely non-essential. A perfect one for Nana to nod off in front of. **LI-Z**

In cinemas

music reviews

Nobody does it better than Carly

At 83, the singer is in buoyant form despite having Parkinson's, says Victoria Segal

pop

Carly Simon
Comes in Waves
Iris
★★★★☆

At this stage in her life, Carly Simon has every right to turn in a biblically gloomy record, her own take on Leonard Cohen's *You Want It Darker* or Johnny Cash's *American IV*. The 83-year-old singer-songwriter recently announced that she had been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and had also undergone facial surgery for basal cell carcinoma. In a gently rueful statement she wrote how these health issues drove her to "hibernate" from public life: "I have become an all-season bear."

Yet *Comes in Waves*, her first album of original material since *This Kind of Love* (2008), is far from doom-laden. Recorded at her Martha's Vineyard home with family and friends — among them Sally and Ben, her children from her marriage to James Taylor — these songs about family, love and memory are remarkably full of good cheer, quiet wisdom and, at times, a twinkling playfulness that rolls back the years to Simon's 1970s glory days as a Me Generation standard-bearer. It catches an artist who's absolutely not drawing the curtains on her career and creativity. "I have not stopped living," she said, "and I have not stopped working."

JOHN ANGELILLO/UPI/SHUTTERSTOCK

That's made abundantly clear by the opening track, *Howl*, a song encouraging a recently betrayed friend to give into cathartic screaming and "scratch out the moon". It's not polite or stately, instead radiating warmth, concern and self-possession. That eccentricity is underlined by *Peaches*, the unwanted fruit in Simon's garden becoming a metaphor for a keen but unsuitable suitor. The squashy 1980s keyboards and drums underline the winsomeness, but it's hard to object to a song of such whimsical high spirits.

The same is true of *Four in the Morning*, a song written by her late friend Judy Belushi, widow of the comedian John, a kind of old-school women's lib *She's Leaving Home* that ends in a dizzy acoustic meltdown (Ben Taylor is credited with playing "weird little things"). It's a record that's closer to the colourful blankets and wind chimes of new-age private presses than might be imagined from a star of Simon's status.

Elsewhere, however, these songs stay in balance. *The Father Daughter Dance*, originally written for a stage musical of *On Golden Pond*, tips into mawkishness, but *Mother of Pearl*, written for her daughter, is fierce with ragged, Peggy Seeger-style feeling, while the musical-theatre glitter of *Maybe I Never Loved You* is tempered by Simon's steady, reflective voice: "I married you, we had a kid/ That counts for something."

She tackles death, not least on *Love Has No Ending*, her moving symphonic-folk setting of WH Auden's *As I Walked out One Evening*. The producer and former Yardbird Paul Samwell-Smith also helps to remodel *Share the End*, an apocalyptic call-to-arms from Simon's second album, *Anticipation* (1971). It melts away the barriers between past and present, its raptures chiming sharply with the current climate.

Turning the end times into a jamboree fits *Comes in Waves*, though, Simon not so much raging against the dying of the light as fixing it with a penetrating stare. The album closes with the fearless wisdom of *Do It Anyway*, fading out into a joyful recording of a party, a riot of people playing music and laughing until they cry. For this idiosyncratic but triumphant album, it couldn't be a more appropriate ending.

Getdown Services
Massive Champion
Breakfast
★★★★☆

Less art school than Dry Cleaning, less abrasive than Sleaford Mods, Getdown Services evoke the 1990s glam-racketeers Earl Brutus and Birkenhead's veteran satirists Half Man Half Biscuit, delivering distempered, disjointed — but oddly revealing — commentary on steroid cream (*Lentils*), the Sycamore Gap (*I Can't Die Like That*) or vomiting bus drunks (the Ivor Cutleresque folk outlier *Poor Bannister*). Surprisingly tender moments include the vaporous electropop of *Cha Cha Slide*, a heartfelt flashback to the horrors of kids' parties, or *No One Likes Me*, a *Creep*-sized anthem-in-waiting. *Massive Champion* contains multitudes; just hope it doesn't sit next to you on the bus.

Ayra Starr
Starrgirl
Mavin/Republic
★★★★☆

With her first two albums, *19 & Dangerous* (2021) and *The Year I Turned 21* (2024), the Nigerian singer Ayra Starr followed a positively Adele-like approach to rigorously chronological titles. It makes sense, then, that her third LP is called *Starrgirl*, apparently just another factual description of the stage of life she's now entering: billions of streams, Grammy nominations, Glastonbury main-stage performances, guest spots with Coldplay. The music on *Starrgirl* is a supersaturated fusion of Afrobeat, pop and R&B in which Starr glides between genres and moods, selling the diaphanous piano ballad *Heaven Baby* — a collaboration with Zayn Malik that demands yards of chiffon and a wind machine — as hard as the dancehall slam of *Who's Dat Girl* (featuring Rema) or *Ms Paper*'s strobing hypno-pop.

Jungle
Sunshine
Caiola
★★★☆☆

It initially feels as if Jungle might have left it late to release their fifth album — not because Tom McFarland, Josh Lloyd-Watson and Lydia Kitto's artfully vintage disco-soul paste-ups have missed any fashionable boat, but because *Sunshine* shoots for sound-of-the-summer territory late in the season. Thanks to Kitto's dreamy vocals, though, there is a slight chill around the edges of their follow-up to 2023's *Volcano*, there in the quiver of *Carry On*, the sad carnival banger *Come Back to Me* or *Someday, Somewhere*, as wistful as you can get while dancing at a beachside bar. Still, *Sunshine* maintains their ability to fill a room with atmospheric helium. The *Music Sounds Better with You* groove of *The Wave* or *Move Like You Do*'s aerosolised Avalanches-style funk do nothing to subvert Jungle's arena-filling good vibes.

Schubert with extra words — and a square piano

It isn't unusual for Schubert's song cycles to be performed live with extra ingredients: a theatrical element, maybe, or filmed inserts underlying the "winter journey" or other travails described in the songs' texts. The present account of *Die schöne Müllerin* from fellow Austrians **Georg Nigl** (baritone) and **Alexander Gergelyfi** (piano), *right*, takes a different, possibly more eyebrow-raising path.

First, following some 19th-century precedents, Nigl expands the soloist's role by skilfully reading the five poems that Schubert chose not to set from the 25 written by the poet Wilhelm Müller about the forlorn romantic hopes of an itinerant young miller. Also, Nigl's sonorous and probing voice sometimes gives Schubert's notes twiddly bits and other "expressive" embellishments. Happily, these diminish as the cycle advances.

There's no change in the striking sounds of Gergelyfi's instrument: a "square piano" (actually of oblong construction) from 1810 whose tone world, especially in the lower registers, suggests a clavichord with a heavy cold. You're always aware of a string being plucked rather than a note on a keyboard being pressed. The combined effect of piano and voice takes us far from the sounds expected in a concert recital. It's as if we're eavesdropping on an intimate performance inside a Viennese home.

The listener's ears and expectations adjust — well, mine did, with significant rewards following. And the spoken sections, the most intimately delivered of all, definitely add to the experience, even with the texts and their translations printed in the booklet in a size and typeface that wouldn't win any optician's approval. An extraordinary album.

classical

Georg Nigl/ Alexander Gergelyfi
Schubert
Alpha Classics
★★★★☆

Duo Dorado
Spice of Italy
Chaconne
★★★★☆

The 17th-century diarist John Evelyn, listening in London, called the artistry of the Italian violinist Nicola Matteis not just stupendous but "stupendious".

It's still pretty dazzling today, to judge at least by his brilliantly imaginative violin music: four volumes of arias, preludes, gavottes, fugues and other pieces, largely forgotten by history until late last century.

What Evelyn heard in Matteis's music and playing was Italianate bravura: something strongly echoed in the spice and sunshine radiating from **Duo Dorado**, formed in 1999 by the violinist Hazel Brooks and the harpsichordist David Pollock — names that couldn't be more English.

Forget about English reserve, though, as the duo charge through Matteis's incisive fast movements, linger awhile in grave sarabandes, or switch to the less florid beauties of two sonatas by Matteis Jr.

Geoff Brown

From Tubi to Pluto — the best free streamers taking on Netflix

If you don't fancy Now or Disney+ there are gems to be found on lesser-known platforms, says James Jackson

To watch television today is to be in a constant dilemma. There is the endless choice as you click through rows of tiles in the catalogue of any streaming service (it was so much easier when it was a handful of channels and a few grumbles about repeats). Then there is the other dilemma: which streaming services to shell out for.

If you were to subscribe to all the biggest streamers in the UK — Netflix, Prime Video, Disney+, Now, Apple TV and Paramount+ — you could be paying close to £88 a month on top of the licence fee (which in April rose to £180 a year). And if you want to watch the new Harry Potter series coming on Christmas Day? You'll need to subscribe to HBO Max.

Or that cost could be chopped in half if you choose each streamer's bargain tier, which means watching *The Crown* with commercial breaks. These cheaper deals are proving popular (the number of with-ads packages taken out overtook the pricier ad-free ones for the first time late last year), but isn't paying to watch adverts a bit galling?

While the streaming giants receive all the hype, there is something else going on in TV: the rise of alternative free streamers. You'll of course know about iPlayer, ITVX and Channel 4 and 5's on-demand services. Viewing of these increased by 9 per cent year-on-year, Ofcom announced last month, making them the fastest-growing category of television service. Now iPlayer props up overall BBC viewing. But how about Tubi? Or Pluto TV, or Rakuten TV? Heard of those?

In industry terms you'd call them Avods (ad-supported video on demand) or Fast (free, ad-supported television). These streaming upstarts, Davids to the Netflix Goliath, are there online free, no account needed, and offering hours of stuff to watch in return for a few adverts.

Leading the charge in the UK is Tubi, which has more than 75,000 films and TV episodes available, having tripled the size of its catalogue since launching in early 2024. Internationally Tubi, which is owned by Fox Corp, announced last week that its monthly active users had reached 110 million in 2026. David Salmon, its executive vice-president, says: "We do offer a parallel choice. We have the largest content offering available in the UK of any of the major streamers. And it helps that we are free — when you talk about kind of barriers to entry, to be able to dive into what's on offer uninterrupted by the payment details is a big advantage.

"In general, consumer preference is very broad, and this entire [free with ads] model is built around super-serving fandoms. Our plan is to just keep doubling down and providing users with the most choice possible so they can dive more deeply."

But who is watching Tubi? According to a 2025 YouGov survey, 51 per cent of Tubi's UK audience is Gen Z and millennial viewers, presumably happy to bypass traditional telly while being media-savvy and budget-conscious when it comes to streaming.

Most of Tubi's viewers, Salmon says, watch it on the biggest screen in the home (four out of five watch via connected TV screens). These streamers can be found pre-loaded on your screen or can be "cast" from your phone or with an Amazon Fire stick or other device.

Browsing the homepage of each of the services can feel a somewhat random experience, at least until the algorithm has worked out what to feed you. An early go with Pluto TV, for example, offered ghost-hunting documentaries jostling below a row of such reality shows as *Catfish: The TV Show* and *Laguna Beach*.

"Fast" channels are also on the rise, which are on platforms such as Tubi, Pluto and Rakuten but can be found on the free streaming service Freely, which, backed by the BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and 5, is like an on-demand version of Freeview and has more than 75,000 hours of shows and films (the platform is integrated into new smart TVs or can be accessed through a Freely device plugged into your TV).

These online Fast offerings mimic traditional scheduled channels but curate particular shows or round up programmes or films on the same theme — a kind of midway ground between on-demand and trad telly. Which is great if you're really sick of surfing menus and feel watching wall-to-wall episodes of *Judge Judy* or *Mr Bean* is time well spent.

Truly, the modern TV world is a multifarious thing. And it seems the deeper you dive, the more gems can be found — for free, with just a few ads.

Clockwise from top: Birdman, Odd Man Out, Humans and The Bridge

Tubi UK

What is it? A well-organised platform with purple and yellow branding and easy-to-navigate browsing categories. There is content from big Hollywood studios such as Lionsgate and NBCUniversal in addition to Tubi originals from the US. "*Summer's Last Resort* [a teen comedy] did really well for us," Salmon says.
TV shows Go to the "Brit List" collection, for example, and you get decent older series, from cult dramas such as Charlie Brooker's satire *Dead Set* and the AI-presaging *Humans* to the comedy *The IT Crowd*. Classic rock diehards, for example, could click on, say, Pink Floyd to get (unauthorised) documentaries about the band.
Films British films include *Shaun of the Dead*, *Hot Fuzz* and *A Cock and Bull Story*, while American ones include *If Beale Street Could Talk* and *Donnie Darko*. A row of "cult classics" includes *The Big Lebowski* and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.

Pluto TV

What is it? Launched in the UK in 2018, this streamer is now owned by the freshly minted Paramount Skydance conglomerate.
TV shows Unless you're interested in true crime documentaries or such shows as *The Simple Life* or *Geordie Shore* in the "Reality" row, head to the "On demand" tab and search in the "Bingeable dramas" to find a hotchpotch of old titles including *Monkey* and *Cagney & Lacey*.
Films A bewilderingly eclectic bunch, but with decent titles in the "Must watch" row: *Birdman*, *Drive*, *Still Alice*.

Rakuten TV

What is it? This streamer, owned by the Japanese conglomerate of the same name, can be a bit overwhelming to navigate, but some TV episodes seem to be ad-free. It is, though, perhaps more about the films on offer.
TV shows Scandi classics such as *The Bridge*, *Borgen* and *The Killing* can be found in the mix. In the "Live TV" tab, the Kids channel could offer background fare for tots.
Films Some decent options in the free-to-watch films once you get into the platform (*JFK*, *The Big Short*, *Vice*), while Rakuten has a rental service (you'll need to register). *Disclosure Day*, at £15.99, is No 1.

TPTV Encore

What is it? This is the catch-up offshoot of Talking Pictures TV. It's free once you've signed up, or there is a paid-for version without ads and with a few exclusives.
TV shows *Z Cars*, *The Adventures of Robin Hood* starring Richard Greene, *Laurel and Hardy* etc.
Films Some choice vintage cuts, such as James Mason in *Odd Man Out*, *This Happy Breed*, *An Englishman Abroad* and cult 1981 British horror *The Appointment*.

first night

proms

LA Phil/Dudamel

Royal Albert Hall, London

★★★☆☆

Championing lots of new music by Latin American composers will probably be seen as Gustavo Dudamel's most significant achievement in his 17 years at the helm of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. So it was apt that one of the most ambitious of these commissions should end the LA Phil's second night at the BBC Proms — and be enthusiastically acclaimed in a packed Albert Hall.

It's a ballet score with a story ripped from contemporary headlines. The alleged rape by police officers of a young woman in Mexico City in 2019 prompted a huge protest by women who threw pink glitter on the streets — an uprising given the name *revolución diamantina*. That's also the title of the 42-minute ballet by the Mexican composer Gabriela Ortiz, who refers in her programme note to other rebellions against violence directed at women, including that by their own partners.

A serious subject, then, but Ortiz has the rhythms of Latin America in her blood (both her parents were folk musicians) and several of the six movements became far-from-sombre fiestas of rhythm led by a battery of percussion and enhanced by eight amplified female vocalists from the Los Angeles Master Chorale. They delivered mostly punchy nonverbal sounds, except towards the end when they erupted into feminist slogans.

There were more reflective moments and angry swirls of sound suggesting the fury of a gathering crowd. But the overall mood seemed surprisingly vibrant, given the dark context.

And the musical style? A postmodern potpourri, with some obvious nods to *The Rite of Spring*, a lot of minimalist pulsing and snatches of popular song as well as cacophonies of street sounds (the inevitable police whistle cutting through one climax).

Dull it never was, and predictably Dudamel was in his element directing a score with plenty of incident and colour. The orchestra played with much more enthusiasm than was evident in a performance of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony that came to life only in the forceful finale.

Richard Morrison

On BBC Sounds; at the Edinburgh International Festival, today; on BBC4/iPlayer

MANUEL HARLAN

Xander Pang, centre, as the vigilante Light with the cast of a show that never takes itself too seriously

Manga and high camp

The popular Japanese franchise has been turned into a jolly new musical, says Kate Maltby

theatre

Death Note: The Musical

Barbican, London (140min)

★★★★☆

When killers walk free and the justice system buckles, how should we react? The central question of the Japanese manga franchise *Death Note* feels topical, with its musical incarnation opening as the fallout continues from the government's early release scheme. In the show's first scene, we meet Light Yagami, a high-school student raging at the news of a murderer's acquittal on a technicality. Fortunately, Light is soon given the power to kill at will, owing to a playful and bored god. Unfortunately, his vigilantism draws the attention of a police task force led by his own father, and of a detective with superpowers of his own, the mysterious "L".

The *Death Note* universe has spawned a 12-volume manga series, 37-episode anime adaptation, five movies including an American remake, plus video games and novelisations. Each has its own rules. But where other franchises might expect prior knowledge from its audience, *Death Note: The Musical* works hard to draw in newcomers (age guidance is 12 plus). Instead of packing in all the subplots from the established adventures of Light and L, Ivan Menchell has constructed a clean and simple book framework telling a single clear story. Veterans and novices alike will be enchanted.

As Light, Xander Pang is compelling, luring us into his ever-darker inner world. What makes this musical a standout, however, is the humour laced through the other performances, especially that of Colin Ryan as L, our Sherlockesque oddball detective, and Telly Leung as the Loki-like Ryuk, Light's cynical shinigami (a Japanese personal god of death). The joy of *Death Note* is that it never takes itself too seriously. These characters are high camp and utterly absurd, and they know it. It is just great fun.

Vocally, all perform well with Frank Wildhorn's rock opera score, but the breakout performance comes from Grace Mouat as Rem, a rival shinigami keeping an eye on Light's love interest. Her power ballad *When Love Comes* is a hairs-on-the-back-of-the-neck moment, as Rem realises she's going to have to intervene even at the cost of her own immortality. Earlier, the gods had united for one of the show's most memorable numbers in *They're Only Human*. Rem, an ice goddess in white, fails to maintain this chilly attitude to mortals, but Ryuk, beautifully costumed by Sachiko Nakahara in black leather and exposed bones, stays deliciously aloof.

To Sep 12

comedy

Ed Night

Monkey Barrel, Edinburgh

★★★★☆

A fair few comics of all ages can rattle out real proper gags, as cannily crafted as they are casually deployed. A fair few younger comics will touch on issues of mental health and being priced out of the housing market. Can anyone combine the two with a surer touch than Ed Night?

He's only 30 but has been doing shows for a decade. He comes across like a young-old master — fresh-faced, spiv-moustached — in this even better Fringe follow-up to last year's Edinburgh Comedy Award-nominated breakthrough. Mind you, he tells us, leaning on a crutch, nursing a recently broken foot, he's on his eighth or ninth breakthrough by now. "I can't afford to do it again."

In *We'll Be Alright, Darling*, Night spreads a morose sense of alienation with a supreme sense of relaxation. Sometimes he gives us a conspiratorial glance, as if to say, "Can you believe I just said that... Good, though, wasn't it?" He wraps his storytelling into his recent time in the hospital waiting room. Otherwise, this gently askew south Londoner wraps in everything from *Roe v Wade* to Freedom Passes, from bisexuality to the competing demands of depression and OCD.

> **He wraps in everything from mental health to gravy boats**

He won't mention a problem unless it comes with a joke attached, however. Here are ideas about language, success, masculinity, suicide and generational inequality. Here, too, are more good laughs about gravy boats than I thought I'd have in one lifetime, let alone one hour.

Night often mentions his mother; less often his father, the comic and panel-show scriptwriter Kevin Day. He has his old man's sense of craft. Really, though, he has a stealthy, furtively revealing sense of fun that is all his own.

Dominic Maxwell

To Aug 30

theatre

Annie Wobbler (Revisited)

Pleasance Dome, Edinburgh (80min)

★★★★☆

Flanked by shop window mannequins, Nichola McAuliffe buries deep under the skin of three very different women in *Annie Wobbler (Revisited)*. It's more than 40 years since the playwright Arnold Wesker created these monologues for the actress, who eventually took them to the West End. She now presents a chronologically reordered text at the Pleasance Dome with some 21st-century elements scattered here and there.

The results are beguiling. Briefly disappearing behind a screen to change costume, McAuliffe immerses herself in each role, beginning with an insecure university graduate before moving on to a bestselling author and the title character, a rambling old dear who was, apparently, a fixture in Wesker's own East End childhood. As with the recent revival of the Fifties domestic drama *Roots*, at the Almeida in London, the sharpness of the writing is a reminder that a Wesker revival is overdue.

Nichola McAuliffe is beguiling

A smug, unseen suitor is the target for barbs in the opening piece as a hesitant young woman, armed with her degree in French, tries to navigate the dating scene. In the second miniature, a successful novelist named Annabella Wharton parries questions from an invisible interviewer. Money is one of the subjects under discussion.

In *The Birth of Shylock and the Death of Zero Mostel*, Wesker's behind-the-scenes journal about the failure of his reinterpretation of *The Merchant of Venice*, there's a touching paragraph in which, buoyed by thoughts of being the toast of Broadway, he excitedly calculates how much money he thinks is about to come rolling in. Wharton is a cooler customer; she likes to give the impression that she doesn't care one way or the other about her Swiss bank account.

And then comes the decrepit Annie, whiling away the hours at a railway station as she shuffles through fragments of her memory. Her mind cannot stop wandering. Darkness may be about to claim her, yet she still has stories to tell. It's a poignant end to a hypnotic performance.

Clive Davis

To Aug 31, then Finborough Theatre, London, Sep 2 to 26

This latest period heroine is an absolute hoot

James Jackson TV review

My Brilliant Career
Netflix
★★★★☆

Who doesn't love Australian telly? Its dramas (*The Newsreader*) and its comedies (*Colin from Accounts*; *Fisk*), its soaps (*Neighbours*) and its kids shows (*Bluey*) have a kind of natural, unforced energy that we can't seem to get enough of. Now here's an Aussie period drama that again works wonders for not trying to be too clever, for being funny, for bouncing along like a daft kangaroo. *My Brilliant Career* is a billabong in a bit of a desert of a week for new telly.

Yes, the plot of this adaptation of Miles Franklin's feminist novel sounds identical to several hundred other period romps: a young woman in 1900 is required to marry, except she has no truck with the men/romance thing because she's too irrepressibly free-spirited. This again, except... this is Australian. By the 15-minute mark Sybylla has squatted down in the garden to have a pee from under her dress, uncouth spirit that she is.

But above all, it works because the actress playing Sybylla is such a hoot. The entire show can sometimes feel as if it's built around Philippa Northeast's face, such is its expressiveness: a frown wrinkling between wide-set eyes, a mouth downturning at the corners on the verge of amusement.

Sybylla, an aspiring writer of florid, ribald prose, has had to leave the family farm at dirt-poor Possum Gully to find a gentleman at posh Caddagat, the estate owned by snooty granny Winifred (Anna Chancellor). Sybylla's sister Gertie is excited, advising her: "Maybe you'll meet a handsome stranger and fall desperately in love!" To which Sybylla shoots back, with a scoffing look on her face: "That's your dream, Gertie. It's not mine!" Whatever could happen next?

Sybylla chances on Harry Beecham (*Slow Horses*' Christopher Chung) taking off his shirt next to his steed to reveal a ripped torso. OK, rather than blushing with unbridled lust she instead delights in how his hotness has inspired a simile ("sun burns off the dew like drying sweat..."). Yet shortly afterwards she near-swoons when they join hands to dance.

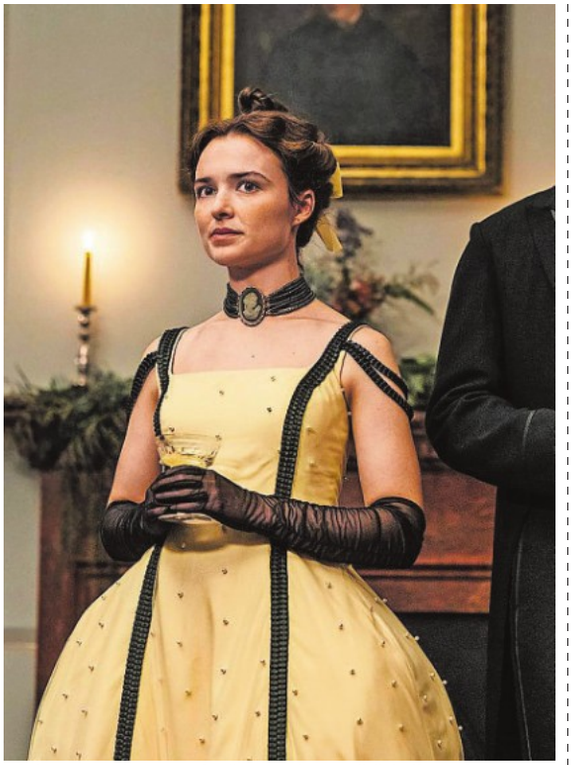
This dance scene isn't to a fusty Sir Roger de Coverley but to the band's rendition of Rod Stewart's *Young Turks*, 82 years before it was released (because every period drama now has to have an anachronistic soundtrack). Which, like everything here, wanders the line between maddening and infectious, the latter winning.

Sybylla dances like a stomping, wild-haired wombat. As for Chung, whether or not you find him swoonsome he's unarguably a long way from his cringe-inducing "Rodzilla" git in *Slow Horses*, showing instead a pleasant charisma.

Then a love triangle follows... OK, I'm making the series sound pretty naff, and that's unfair. Perhaps, and unlike the 1979 film adaptation that launched the brilliant careers of Judy Davis and Sam Neill, this has a very 2020s approach — not as annoyingly "sexy" as *Bridgerton*, but with a gay subplot and Wet Leg needle-dropping apparently slanted at Gen Z.

But it's self-aware and doesn't sell out the empowerment message of Franklin's novel. And it says something about Northeast's terrific performance — along with the likeable Aussieness all round — that anyone, regardless of their age, will enjoy it. She's a ripper.

IAN ROUTLEDGE/NETFLIX



Philippa Northeast as the "uncouth spirit" Sybylla Melvyn

Radio choice

BBC Proms
Radio 3, 7pm

The BBC Concert Orchestra under the principal guest conductor Edwin Outwater, alongside guest vocalists, celebrates Marvin Gaye, *above*. There are new arrangements of songs from throughout his career, from the classic pop of *I Heard It Through the Grapevine* to his later politically influenced work such as *What's Going On*. In the interval Gus Casely-Hayford, the director of V&A East, discusses his love of Gaye's music and the museum's opening show, *The Music Is Black: A British Story*, and the book he has written about its collection, *Objects & Us: Why Things Matter*. *Clair Woodward*

Times Radio

Digital, web, smart speaker, app

5.00am Tom Nunan with Early Breakfast **6.00** Rosie Wright and Calum Macdonald with Times Radio Breakfast **10.00** Ed Vaizey **1.00pm** Dom Joly **4.00** Carolyn Quinn with Times Radio Drive **7.00** Geoff Norcott **10.00** Henry Bonsu **1.00am** The Best of Times Radio

Radio 2

FM: 88-90.2 MHz

6.30am The Sara Cox Breakfast Show **9.30** Vernon Kay **12.00** Jeremy Vine **2.00pm** Mark Goodier **4.00** Joel Dommett **7.00** Michelle Visage **8.30** Michelle Visage's Handbag Hits **9.00** Sophie Ellis-Bextor's Kitchen Disco **11.00** The Rock Show with Shaun Keaveny **12.00** Romesh Ranganathan: For the Love of Hip-Hop (r) **1.00am** Tony Blackburn's Sounds of Soul **2.00** Pick of the Pops (r) **4.00** Radio 2 Unwinds with Angela Griffin (r)

Radio 3

FM: 90.2-92.4 MHz

6.30am Breakfast
9.30 Essential Classics
1.00pm Classical Live
Including music from Tuesday night's Prom, plus recordings from festivals around the world including the Verbier Festival and Copenhagen's Festival and Friends. Saint-Saëns *(Introduction* and *Rondo capriccioso in A minor*, Op 28); Bantock (Overture — *The Pierrot of the Minute*); Bacewicz (Piano Quintet No 1); Beethoven (Symphony No 6 in F — *Pastoral*); Josquin Desprez (*Motet — O bone et dulcissime Jesu*); Poulenc (Flute Sonata); and Bartók (Concerto for Orchestra)
4.00 Composer of the Week: Montgeroult (1764-1836)
Donald Macleod and Clare Hammond discuss Hélène de Montgeroult's musical imprint (r)
5.00 In Tune
7.00 Choice Live BBC Proms
Edwin Outwater and the BBC Concert Orchestra performs another symphonic adventure, featuring the music of soul legend Marvin Gaye, at the Royal Albert Hall. Songs to include *I Heard it Through the Grapevine*; *Too Busy Thinking About My Baby*; *Sunny*; *How Sweet It Is (To Be Loved By You)*; *Can I Get a Witness*; *It Takes Two*; *Ain't Nothing Like The Real Thing*; *If I Could Build my Whole World Around You*; *Your Precious Love*; *My Mistake (Was to Love You)*; *You're All I Need to Get By*; *Ain't No Mountain High Enough*; *Let's Get It On*; *Mercy Mercy Me*; *Trouble Man*; *Inner City Blues*; *Here, my dear*; *After the Dance*; *I Want You*; *A Funky Space Reincarnation*; *Got to Give It Up* and *What's Going On*
10.00 Late Junction
Featuring a collaboration between Savina Yannatou and Johanes 'Mo'ong' Santoso Pribadi
11.30 'Round Midnight
Jamie Cullum presents
12.30am Through the Night

Radio 4

FM: 92.4-94.6 MHz

5.00am News Summary
5.04 The Briefing Room (r)
5.34 Shipping Forecast
5.43 Prayer for the Day
5.45 Farming Today
6.00 Today
9.00 Desert Island Discs (r)
10.00 Woman's Hour
Presented by Anita Rani
11.00 The Food Programme
11.45 Book of the Week: Hiroshima, 8.15: The Lost Memoir
By Kiyoshi Tanimoto and Koko Kondo. Read by Mark Takeshi Ota and Naoko Mori and abridged by Jo Rowntree and Lisa Lipman (5/5)
12.04pm Rare Earth (1/6)
1.00 The World at One
1.45 Human Intelligence
2.00 The Archers (r)
2.15 Drama: Central Intelligence
By Greg Haddrick (6/10)
2.45 Living on the Edge (7/10) (r)
3.00 Gardeners' Question Time
3.45 Short Works
4.00 Last Word
4.30 Sideways (5/8) (r)
5.00 PM
6.00 Six O'Clock News
6.30 The People Have Spoken
Ian Smith seeks satirical solutions to the world's problems (1/3)
7.00 The Archers
A decision is reached at Brookfield
7.15 Add to Playlist
Soweto Kinch and NoLay select tracks by black British artists (1/6)
8.00 Any Questions?
Chaired by Alex Forsyth
8.55 This Week in History (r)
9.00 Natalie Haynes Stands Up for the Classics (3/7) (r)
9.30 Breakin' the Cycle (3/6) (r)
10.00 The World Tonight
10.45 Book at Bedtime:
The Vicar of Wakefield (10/10)
11.00 Americast
11.30 A Good Read (8/9) (r)
12.00 News and Weather
12.30am Book of the Week: Hiroshima, 8.15: The Lost Memoir. The fifth and final part (r)
12.48 Shipping Forecast
1.00 As BBC World Service

Radio 4 Extra

Digital only

8.00am The Confessional **8.30** Adrian Mole: Cappuccino Years **8.45** Small Island **9.00** Olga Koch: OK Computer **9.30** Following the Martian Invasion **9.45** Daily Service **10.00** Soul Music **10.30** Pilot **11.00** The Wolf Far Hence **11.30** The Senior Partner **12.00** Flying the Flag **12.30pm** Beyond Our Ken **1.00** The Confessional **1.30** Adrian Mole: The Cappuccino Years **1.45** Small Island **2.00** The Museum of Curiosity **2.30** Millport **3.00** The Hunting of the Snark **3.45** Short Works **4.00** Soul Music **4.30** Pilot **5.00** The Wolf Far Hence **5.30** The Senior Partner **6.00** Flying the Flag **6.30** Beyond Our Ken **7.00** The Confessional **7.30** Adrian Mole: The Cappuccino Years **7.45** Small Island **8.00** The Museum of Curiosity **8.30** Millport **9.00** The Hunting of the Snark **9.45** Short Works **10.00** Olga Koch: OK Computer **10.30** Njambi McGrath: Becoming Njambi **10.45** Rhys James Is **11.00** Vent **11.30** Laura Solon: Talking and Not Talking

Radio 5 Live

MW: 693, 909

5.00am Wake Up to Money **6.00** 5 Live Breakfast **9.00** Nicky Campbell **11.00** Gordon Smart **1.00pm** Elis James and John Robins **2.00** Matt Chorley **4.00** 5 Live Drive **7.00** 5 Live Sport **8.30** Athletics **10.00** Stephen Nolan **1.00am** Charlie Taylor

talkSPORT

MW: 1053, 1089 kHz

5.00am Early Sports Breakfast **6.00** Alan Brazil **10.00** Sam Matterface & Alex Crook **1.00pm** Hawksbee and Jacobs **4.00** talkSPORT Drive **7.00** Kick Off: Wolverhampton Wanderers v Blackburn Rovers (Kick-off **8.00**). **10.00** The Sports Bar Weekender. Sports news and debate **1.00am** Extra Time with Ben Fletcher

Talk

Digital only

6.00am Ian Collins **10.00** Alex Phillips **1.00pm** David Bull **4.00** Kevin O'Sullivan **7.00** Peter Cardwell **9.00** What Just Happened? with Kevin O'Sullivan **10.00** Andre Walker ft. Ash **1.00am** Ben Fletcher

6 Music

Digital only

5.00am The Remix with Chris Hawkins **5.30** Chris Hawkins **7.00** Nick Grimshaw **10.00** Lauren Laverne **1.00pm** Craig Charles **4.00** Huw Stephens **7.00** The People's Party with Femi Koleoso **9.00** Indie Forever **11.00** The 6 Mix with Mary Anne Hobbs **12.00** 6 Music's Rave Forever **1.00am** Forever Dark **2.00** Focus Beats **4.00** Ambient Focus

Virgin Radio

Digital only

6.30am The Chris Evans Breakfast Show **10.00** Emma B **2.00pm** Ben Jones **6.00** Stu Elmore **10.00** Goldierocks **2.00am** Jen Thomas

Classic FM

FM: 100-102 MHz

6.30am Classic FM Breakfast with Tim Lihoreau **9.00** The Classic FM Hall of Fame Hour with Tim Lihoreau **10.00** Aled Jones **1.00pm** Anne-Marie Minhall **4.00** Margherita Taylor **6.00** Classic FM at the Movies with Jonathan Ross **8.00** Classical Spotlight with Alexander Armstrong **10.00** Calm Classics **2.00am** Katie Breathwick

television

PICKS OF THE DAY

Frank Skinner: 30 Years of Dirt
Sky One/Now, 9pm

"They're filming this in black-and-white," says Frank Skinner to his audience of grey-sprinkled fans at the Soho Theatre in Walthamstow, east London. "They said that's how people picture me. It comes out on VHS next week." Having emerged on to the stage arms aloft, accepting the delighted applause of his fans with the confident entitlement of a man who has sold out an extended nationwide tour including three West End runs, he sets out his store with a complaint as to the two empty seats in the front row. (He will, he explains with an air of a man who purposely left them empty, feel much better about the non-attendance if he drives past them being cut out of their car on his way home). Football might not have come home this summer, but with *30 Years of Dirt* Skinner is triumphant. **Helen Stewart**

Frank Skinner (Sky One/Now, 9pm)

Beethoven's Seventh at the Proms
BBC4, 7pm

After his appearance at the World Cup final half-time show, the Venezuelan conductor Gustavo Dudamel presents his second Prom of the season, directing the Los Angeles Philharmonic for a tantalising evening of energy and dance as he pairs Beethoven's Seventh Symphony with Gabriela Ortiz's *Revolucion diamantina.* If the reviews of a similar event performed in LA in February are an indication, it promises to be a spectacular night characterised by Dudamel's signature physicality and momentum. The Seventh is suited to his style, with its propulsive sense of movement towards a prancing, dancing finale. After the intermission is the UK premiere of Ortiz's work, inspired by Mexico's 2019 Glitter Revolution protest, which was staged against state violence against women and girls. Georgia Mann presents. **HS**

BBC1

6.00am Breakfast
9.30 Animal Park (r) (AD)
10.00 Trace, Track, Get My Car Back (r)
10.30 Live European Athletics Championships: Birmingham 2026. Jeanette Kwakye presents coverage of the opening session on day five from Alexander Stadium, where the heptathlon gets under way with the 100m hurdles and high jump
1.15pm BBC News at One; Weather
1.40 BBC Regional News; Weather
1.50 BBC News at One; Weather
2.00 The Hairdresser Mysteries. Hallowe'en arrives along with an alarming crime wave, and Lily makes a chilling discovery (AD)
2.45 Escape to the Country. A couple seek a new home in Argyll and Bute (r) (AD)
3.30 The Repair Shop. Items including an old clocking-in clock are restored (r) (AD)
4.30 The Answer Run. Fast-paced quiz
5.15 Pointless. Quiz series (r)
6.00 BBC News at Six; Weather
6.30 BBC Regional News; Weather

7.00 The One Show at 20 Alex Jones and Roman Kemp present an extended edition bringing together some of the biggest names, favourite stories and standout moments from the past 20 years of the magazine show

8.00 Live European Athletics Championships: Birmingham 2026 Gabby Logan presents further coverage of the evening session on day five from Alexander Stadium. One of the most eagerly anticipated events of the championships brings the night to a close, with reigning champion Keely Hodgkinson of Great Britain, Dutch 400m world record-holder Femke Broeders-Bol and rising Swiss star Audrey Werro all expected to be in women's 800m contention. Finals also take place in the men's high jump, 400m hurdles and 200m, and the women's discus

10.00 BBC News at Ten

10.30 BBC Regional News and Weather

10.40 Ann Droid Linda and Sue go camping to see a meteor storm under clear skies. *See picks of the day* (5/6) (AD)

11.10 FILM: Mothers' Instinct (15, 2024) When an accident shatters the harmonious lives of two housewives, guilt, suspicion and paranoia harm their sisterly bond. Drama starring Anne Hathaway, Jessica Chastain and Josh Charles. *See film choice*

12.45am-6.00 BBC News

BBC2

6.30am The Answer Run (r)
7.15 Money for Nothing (r)
8.00 Sign Zone: Marcus Wareing Simply Provence. A compilation edition (r) (SL)
9.00 BBC News
10.30 Antiques Road Trip (r)
11.15 Homes Under the Hammer (r)
12.15pm Bargain Hunt (r) (AD)
1.00 Richard Osman's House of Games (r)
1.30 The Finish Line. Quiz show (r)
2.15 Do You Know Your Place? Wrexham (r)
2.45 The Great Rift: Africa's Wild Heart. The Great Rift Valley's waterways (r) (AD)
3.45 The Great Rift: Africa's Wild Heart. The grasslands of east Africa (r) (AD)
4.35 Vintage Antiques Roadshow. (r)
5.15 Flog It! From Basingstoke (r)
6.00 Richard Osman's House of Games. Chris Bisson, Danielle Harold, Katharine Merry and Robert Webb take part (r)
6.30 Bear Grylls: Wild Reckoning. Help for a married couple who are unable to agree on what type of house they should buy (r) (AD)

7.00 Live European Athletics Championships: Birmingham 2026 Coverage of the evening session on day five from Alexander Stadium. Events include the women's 10,000m final, while the heptathlon also continues with the shot put. Coverage continues on BBC One

8.00 Gardeners' World As the drought takes its toll on Longmeadow, Monty Don takes stock of his garden. Meanwhile, Frances Tophill explores clifftop gardening in Clovelly, north Devon, and Adam Frost visits a historic Norfolk kitchen garden

9.00 Bergerac Arthur Wakefield prepares to throw Julien to the wolves, but a revelation about Cate's murder changes everything (5/6) (AD)

9.45 QI XL Sandi Toksvig hosts, with Rose Matafeo, Lou Sanders and Ross Noble joining Alan Davies (r)

10.30 Newsnight Headline analysis

11.05 FILM: On Falling (15, 2024) A Portuguese worker in a Scottish warehouse comes to terms with loneliness and alienation as she seeks meaning and connection. Drama starring Joana Santos

12.45am-1.45 Sign Zone: The Rapture A forensic psychologist meets a convicted murderer, who foretells an imminent apocalyptic disaster. Psychological thriller starring Ruth Madeley and India Amarteifio. Last in the series (r) (AD, SL)

ITV1

6.00am Good Morning Britain
10.00 This Morning
1.30pm ITV News; Weather
2.00 Dickinson's Real Deal. David Dickinson and his team of dealers set up stall in Oldham, where Alison Chapman gets her hands on some puppets, and Cheryl Hackney falls for a beautiful brooch (r) (AD)
3.00 Deal or No Deal. Stephen Mulhern hosts as another contestant tries to open the 22 red boxes in the right order, taking on the infamous Banker for the chance to win a life-changing cash prize (r) (AD)
4.00 Tipping Point. Ben Shephard hosts the arcade-themed quiz in which contestants drop tokens down a choice of four chutes in the hope of winning a £10,000 jackpot (r)
5.00 The Chase. Bradley Walsh presents as four more contestants answer questions and work as a team to take on one of the ruthless Chasers and secure a cash prize (r)
6.00 Regional News; Weather
6.30 ITV News; Weather

7.30 Abbey Clancy: Celebrity Homes The presenter visits the homes of fashion blogger and *Love Island* star Olivia Bowen, and Emma Thynn — the Marchioness of Bath (2/6) (r)

8.00 Emmerdale Lewis surprises Kev with an announcement, and Bear urges Dylan to see a counsellor (AD)

8.30 Coronation Street Lucy's presence stirs up conflict, and Sarah finds an ally among her fellow jailbirds (AD)

9.00 Who Wants to Be a Millionaire? Celebrity Special Jeremy Clarkson hosts a celebrity version of the quiz in which Steph McGovern and Dion Dublin answer questions to win cash for their chosen charities (r)

10.00 The Twisted Tale of Amanda Knox After four years, Amanda and Raffaele are finally free — but home feels unrecognisable to Amanda, and she faces a public still determined to see her suffer for a crime she did not commit (7/8) (AD)

11.00 ITV News at Ten; Weather; followed by Regional News

11.50 Inside the Langham: Britain's First Grand Hotel The hostelry's managing director oversees progress on the Langham Venice (4/6) (r) (AD)

12.15am Shop on TV 3.00 Force of Nature. How warming seas exacerbate the challenges of parenthood, with a hurricane hitting a flamingo colony while chicks are still on the nest (r) (AD, SL) **3.50** Long Lost Family. Two people search for their brothers (r) (AD, SL) **4.45-6.00** Unwind with ITV

Channel 4

6.30am The King of Queens (r) (AD)
7.45 Everybody Loves Raymond (r) (AD)
9.10 Frasier (r) (AD)
11.10 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA. Help for a struggling Italian restaurant (r)
12.05pm Channel 4 News Summary
12.10 Find It, Fix It, Flog It. Wheel rims are turned into a cool pair of stools (r) (AD)
1.10 The Great House Giveaway. Two strangers buy and renovate a property (r)
2.10 Countdown. With former *Father Ted* star Pauline McLynn in Dictionary Corner
3.00 A Place in the Sun. A Scottish man seeks a holiday home on Gran Canaria (r)
4.00 Saving Country Houses with Penelope Keith. In Dorset, rain and storms threaten Mapperton House's annual plant fair (r) (AD)
5.00 Château DIY. At Château de Saugé, the enormous Scottish-themed suite renovation has been completed (r) (AD)
6.00 American Pickers. A stash from one of the US' oldest bicycle and sporting goods stores is found in Washington DC (r) (AD)

7.00 Channel 4 News

8.00 Surgery Secrets of the Super Rich A beauty journalist has a £9,500 nano-fat treatment to rejuvenate her under-eye shadows, and a former professional footballer tackles hair loss head-on in an eight-hour transplant procedure (5/6) (AD)

9.00 8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown Jimmy Carr hosts the comedy words-and-numbers quiz with Jon Richardson and Roisin Conaty taking on team captain Rob Beckett and Kiell Smith-Bynoe (r)

10.00 Big Fat Quiz: Best Bits There is quizzing disaster in every form imaginable, as the hilarious cast come unstuck in some of the finest moments from the *Big Fat Quiz*

11.05 Sarah Millican: Chatterbox Live Stand-up show recorded at London's Bloomsbury Theatre in 2011, in which the comedienne shares humorous insights into her life, including the perils of living alone (r)

12.10am Bill Bailey Live Part Troll The stand-up star performs at Hammersmith Apollo in 2004 (r) **1.35** Ramsay's Hotel Hell. A debt-ridden hotel in Idaho (r) (AD, SL) **2.25** Four in a Bed (r) **4.35** Couples Come Dine with Me (r) (SL) **5.30** Kirstie's House of Craft (r) **5.40-6.05** A Place in the Sun (r)

5

6.00am Milkshake!
9.15 Jeremy Vine
11.30 Storm & Alexis
12.45pm 5 News at Lunchtime
12.50 Matt Allwright
2.20 FILM: My Husband's Seven Wives (PG, TVM, 2024) A woman meets a stranger who claims to also be married to her husband, and the two uncover a web of lies surrounding him. Thriller starring Kristi Murdock, Christina Licciardi and Kylie Delre
4.00 Castle. A mysterious recurring dream drives Castle and Beckett to seek some answers about the two-month period when he went missing — but their search for the truth has deadly consequences (r)
4.55 Love Nature. Winter on Islay, Scotland's southernmost Inner Hebrides island (r)
5.00 5 News with Dan Walker
6.00 Ibiza: Jewel of the Med. A visit to the Balearic island known for its world-class nightlife and rich cultural history (r)
6.55 5 News Update

7.00 Tom Read Wilson's Magnificent Journey Having travelled across the Alps, Tom finds solace in the beauty of Lake Como, visiting Villa Balbianello before donning a mask for the Venice Carnival (2/3) (r)

7.55 5 News Update

8.00 Alexander Armstrong in Sri Lanka The presenter heads for the paradise isle of the Indian Ocean, exploring its historic culture. His first port of call is the fortress town of Galle, built by the Portuguese in 1588 (1/3) (r)

9.00 The Big Drought of 1975 Documentary telling the story of the record-breaking spell of erratic weather that stretched for 16 long months that began in May 1975 and culminated in the Standpipe Drought of 1976, where thousands of households had to rely on communal outdoor taps for their water (r)

10.30 Piers Morgan: Uncensored Opinion-led news and debate

12.05am Fare Dodgers: At War with the Law (r) **1.00** Cruise TV (r) **2.00** Entertainment News on 5 **2.10** GPs: Behind Closed Doors (r) **3.00** Castle (r) **3.45** Friends (r) (AD) **4.35** Cruising with Susan Calman (r) (AD, SL) **5.25** Entertainment News **5.35** Paw Patrol (r) (SL) **5.45-6.00** Adventures of Paddington (r) (SL)

television

Ann Droid
BBC1, 10.40pm

The Basic Eldercare Robot Linda (Diane Morgan) encourages Sue (Sue Johnston) to dig out her tent, sing campfire songs and take a trip to watch a meteor shower, not the best news for their campsite's owls — or children. Morgan and Johnston are a charming double act and despite the sci-fi presence of an android, the writing is warm and surprisingly tender — watch for a perfect wordless scene

Carpe Diem
More4, 9pm

Foreign crime dramas that find an audience here tend towards the noirish, but this French-language show's casebook comes with a comic twist. Tom Villeneuve (Samuel Le Bihan) spent 17 years in prison for a crime that he didn't commit: now a lawyer, he's on a mission to exonerate the innocent. Tonight he turns his unconventional legal skills towards helping a deep-sea fisherman who has killed a gangster in apparent self-defence. **VS**

STREAMING CHOICE

Duster
HBO Max

If your favourite moments in Quentin Tarantino's *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* were Brad Pitt driving along Sunset Strip, then do we have a series for you. Cancelled after one season, this JJ Abrams/LaToya Morgan 1970s-set crime thriller stars *Lost*'s Josh Holloway as the rugged getaway driver Jim Ellis. Ellis teams up with the FBI's first black female agent, Nina Hayes (Rachel Hilson), to help to bring down the crime syndicate boss Ezra Saxton (Keith David). The plot is flimsy but the cars are beautiful and Hilson is terrific as a young black woman navigating the era's casual racism and sexism. **Andrew Male**

FILM CHOICE

Mothers' Instinct (15, 2024)
BBC1, 11.10pm

Anne Hathaway and Jessica Chastain play Céline and Alice, glamorous 1960s housewives and neighbours. After Céline's son dies in an accident, the unspoken conflict between the pair erupts in venomous accusations, guilty denials, ersatz apologies and physical violence. (94min) **Kevin Maher**

BBC4

7.00pm Beethoven's Seventh at the Proms. Gustavo Dudamel and the Los Angeles Philharmonic perform works by Beethoven and Gabriela Ortiz. *See picks of the day* **8.35** TOTP: 2000. With music by Geri Halliwell, Lene Marlin, and more **9.05** TOTP: 2000. Acts include Geri Halliwell, Blink-182 and No Doubt **9.35** TOTP: 1985. Including music by Kate Bush and the Cars **10.05** TOTP: 1986. With It Bites, Lionel Richie and Anita Dobson **10.35** Ultimate Cover Versions at the BBC. Cover performances from the archives, with Moody Blues, Don McLean, Soft Cell, UB40 and more **11.35** Ultimate Cover Versions at the BBC: Volume 2. With Adele, Annie Lennox, Happy Mondays, Erasure, Blondie and Tina Turner **1.35am** TOTP: 2000 **2.35** TOTP: 1985 **3.05am-3.35** TOTP: 1986

Sky Arts

6.00am André Rieu: La Vie Est Belle **7.45** Artist of the Year: Masterclass (AD) **8.45** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **9.50** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.00** Discovering: Claude Rains (AD) **12.00 FILM: Seven Dials Mystery (12, TVM, 1981) 2.30pm** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **3.00** The Eighties (AD) **4.00** Discovering: Janet Leigh (AD) **5.00** Portrait Artist of the Year 2022 (AD) **6.00** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **7.00** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **8.00** Guy Garvey: From the Vaults **9.00** The Thousand and One Musical Lives of Fleetwood Mac **10.15** Classic Albums **11.35** Fleetwood Mac: Live in Boston **2.00am** The Eagles: Desperado **3.30** Discovering: Eagles **4.00** Skinner & Mina's Literary Road Trip: Pope & Swift (AD) **5.00am-6.00** Sky Arts Book Club Summer Reads Special

More4

8.55am Find It, Fix It, Flog It (AD) **10.00** Four in a Bed **12.40pm** Come Dine with Me **3.20** Four in a Bed **5.50** Car SOS. Car restorations (AD) **7.55** Grand Designs. Following the building of a family home in a village in the Peak District (8/10) (AD) **9.00** Carpe Diem. Tom represents a deep-sea fisherman who admits to murdering a gangster, while Sigourney discovers a threatening figure from Tom's past. In French. *See picks of the day* (2/6) (AD) **10.05** 24 Hours in A&E. A nine-year-old boy has a dangerously high heart rate, and a 32-year-old has fallen 30ft from scaffolding (AD) **11.10** 24 Hours in A&E. A 19-year-old woman is brought in with suspected spinal injuries (AD) **12.15am** 999: On the Front Line **1.15** 24 Hours in A&E (AD) **3.25am-3.55** A Place in the Sun

Wolverhampton Wanderers' new signing Kieran Trippier

Live The Hundred
Sky Sports Main Event, Sky Sports Cricket, 2pm-5.30
The women's Eliminator match at the Oval (Start-time **2.15**)

Live Tennis
Sky Sports Tennis, 4pm-4am, Sky Sports +, 5pm-4am
Day two of the Cincinnati Open staged at Lindner Family Tennis Center in Mason, Ohio

Live PGA Tour Golf
Sky Sports Golf, 5pm-11
Coverage of day two of the St Jude Championship which is staged at TPC Southwind in Memphis, Tennessee

Live The Hundred
Sky Sports Main Event, 5.30pm-7.15, Sky Sports Cricket, 5.30pm-9
The men's Eliminator match at the Oval (Start-time **6.00**)

Live EFL: Wolverhampton Wanderers v Blackburn Rovers
Sky Sports Football, 7pm-10.30
(Kick-off **8.00**). The opening match of the Championship campaign, held at Molineux

Talking Pictures

6.00am FILM: Identity Unknown (U, 1960) (b/w) **7.20 FILM: East of Sudan (U, 1964) 9.10 FILM: Beyond the Curtain (U, 1960)** (b/w) **10.55** Litter Defence Volunteers **11.00** The Lucy Show **11.30 FILM: The Broken Horseshoe (PG, 1953)** (b/w) **1.05pm** The Edgar Wallace Mystery Theatre (b/w) **2.15** The Adventures of Robin Hood (b/w) **2.45 FILM: Brandy for the Parson (U, 1952)** (b/w) **4.20** Look at Life **4.30** The Cheaters (b/w) **5.00** A Family at War **6.00** Rumpole of the Bailey **7.00** Z Cars (b/w) **8.00** Public Eye **9.10** Supernatural (7/8) **10.20** Tales of Frankenstein (b/w) **10.55pm FILM: The Devil Bat (PG, 1940)** Horror with Bela Lugosi (b/w) **12.20am FILM: Gift Horse (PG, 1952)** (b/w) **2.25am-4.30** Boris Karloff: The Man Behind the Monster

Film4

11.00am Cleopatra (PG, 1963) Historical epic starring Elizabeth Taylor **3.45pm Siege of the Saxons (U, 1963)** Medieval adventure starring Ronald Lewis **5.30 The Battle at Apache Pass (PG, 1952)** Western with Jeff Chandler **7.15 Horizon Line (15, 2020)** An estranged couple discover new altitudes of fear aboard a single-engine Cessna plane when the pilot suffers a heart attack. Thriller starring Allison Williams **9.00 Fury (15, 2014)** A tank crew undertakes a final dangerous mission behind enemy lines in the last months of the Second World War. Drama starring Brad Pitt (AD) **11.40 The Invitation (15, 2022)** Horror starring Nathalie Emmanuel **1.45am-4.00 Infinity Pool (18, 2023)** Horror mystery starring Alexander Skarsgard and Mia Goth

BBC3

7.00pm The Catch Up **7.05** Deadly 60. Steve Backshall and the team head to Norway **7.30 FILM: Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb (PG, 2014)** Fantasy comedy sequel starring Ben Stiller and Robin Williams (AD) **9.00** Death in Paradise. A women's football match is cut short when the star player is found dead (5/8) (AD) **10.00** Ghosts Australia (r) **10.25** Ghosts Australia (r) **10.50** Ghosts Australia. When Kate discovers an engagement ring, Sean promises an epic proposal (8/8) **11.15** He Had It Coming. New series. Comedy drama starring Lydia West and Natasha Liu Bordizzo **11.40** He Had It Coming **12.05am** He Had It Coming **2.35** My Mate's a Bad Date (r) **2.55am-3.55** Death in Paradise (r) (AD, SL)

ITV2

6.00am Backyard Builds (SL) **6.30** Dress to Impress (AD, SL) **7.30** The Real Housewives of Potomac **8.20** The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills **9.15** The Only Way Is Essex **10.15** Dawson's Creek **11.10** Charmed **12.10pm** Deal or No Deal (AD) **1.10** Supermarket Sweep **2.10** The Floor (AD) **3.10** The Only Way Is Essex **4.10** The Real Housewives of Potomac **5.00** The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills **6.00** Celebrity Catchphrase (AD) **7.00** The Floor (AD) **8.00** The 1% Club (AD) **9.00 FILM: John Wick: Chapter 2 (15, 2017)** Action starring Keanu Reeves and Riccardo Scamarcio **11.25** Family Guy (AD) **11.55** Family Guy (AD) **12.25am** American Dad! (AD) **1.25am-2.15** Bob's Burgers (AD)

ITV3

6.00am George and Mildred **7.05** Classic Emmerdale (AD) **8.05** Classic Coronation Street (AD) **9.10** Agatha Christie's Poirot (AD) **11.35** Heartbeat (AD) **1.35pm** Midsomer Murders (AD) **3.35** Classic Emmerdale (AD) **4.40** Classic Coronation Street (AD) **5.50** Heartbeat. Rural drama series (AD) **8.00** Doc Martin. Martin prepares to face his hearing (8/8) (AD) **9.00** Doc Martin. Martin's medical career remains under scrutiny, as a GMC representative assesses both him and his surgery (1/8) (AD) **10.00** Grantchester. The suspicious death of a local man interrupts the village's Easter Fete (1/8) (AD) **11.00** Grantchester (2/8) (AD) **11.50** Trial & Retribution (1/10) **12.50am** Trial & Retribution **1.55am-2.20** George and Mildred

ITV4

6.00am Magnum, PI (AD) **8.00** Live World Series of Darts. The Auckland Masters **12.00** Dramatic Finishes **12.10pm** Magnum, PI (AD) **3.15** Boon **4.15** The Professionals (AD) **5.25** British Touring Car Championship Highlights. Action from races staged at Knockhill **6.55** Sharpe. Despatched by Munro to kill a French colonel, Sharpe is wounded, but Harper and a mute nun set about nursing him back to health **9.00 FILM: RoboCop 2 (18, 1990)** The cyborg law enforcer battles a deranged drug lord, unaware the corporation that created him is planning to replace him. Sci-fi thriller sequel starring Peter Weller (AD) **11.15** All Elite Wrestling: Dynamite. Hard-hitting, high-flying action **1.15am** Dark Side of the Ring **2.05am-3.00** Two and a Half Men

U&Drama

6.00am Teleshopping **7.15** The Bill **8.10** Doctors **9.20** Classic Holby City **10.40** Casualty (AD) **11.40** The Bill **12.40pm** Classic EastEnders **2.00** Classic Neighbours **3.00** Whitstable Pearl (AD) **4.10** Lovejoy **5.20** As Time Goes By **6.00** Last of the Summer Wine **8.00** Father Brown. A murderer begins using Kembleford's model village to plan their attacks (AD) **9.00** Father Brown. Lady Felicia pays an impromptu visit (AD) **10.00** New Tricks. The four-year-old case of a murdered graffiti artist is reopened by the team (5/10) (AD) **11.20** Luther. The cop confronts the reality of his actions (4/4) (AD) **12.40am** Lovejoy. Drama series **1.50** Sister Boniface Mysteries (AD) **2.50** Hotel Portofino (SL) **4.00am-6.00** Teleshopping

Variations

BBC1 N Ireland
10.40pm The Big Deal with Steph McGovern (r) 11.40 Ann Droid 12.10am FILM: Mothers' Instinct (2024) 1.40am-6.00 BBC News

ITV1 Wales
7.00pm-7.30 Coast & Country

STV
7.00pm The STV Radio Football Takeover 7.30-8.00 What's on Scotland 12.15am-3.00 Shop on TV 4.45am-6.00 Unwind with STV

UTV
7.00pm UTV Life 7.30pm-8.00 Hidden Northern Ireland

BBC Scotland
7.00pm Reporting Scotland 7.30 Scotland's Greatest Escape (r) 8.00 Paramedics on Scene (r) 9.00 Hercules the Bear: A Love Story. Documentary (r) 10.00 Still Game (r) 10.30 Two Doors Down (r) 11.00pm-12.00 Situationships with Sophie and Christine (r)

S4C
6.00am Cyw 12.00 News 12.05pm Pysgod i Bawb (r) 12.30 Heno (r) 1.00 Y Ci Perffaith (r) 1.30 Dan Do (r) 2.00 News 2.05 Prynhawn Da 3.00 News 3.05 Ty Ffit (r) 4.00 Awr Fawr: Octonots (r) 4.10 Og y Draenog Hapus (r) 4.20 Misho (r) 4.30 Joni Jet (r) 4.45 Parc Glan Gwil (r) 5.00 Stwnsh: Lego Ffrindiau: Amdani Ferched! (r) 5.10 Bwystfil (r) 5.20 Prys a'r Pryfed (r) 5.35 Ar Goll yn Oz (r) 6.00 Gerddi Cymru (r) 6.30 Garddio a Mwy (r) 7.00 Heno 7.30 News 8.00 Mike Bubbins: Un Mewn Miliwn (r) 8.55 News 9.00 Am Dro! (r) 10.00 Y Deis (r) 10.30pm-11.35 Miwsig Fy Mywyd (r)

PBS America

8.00am Weathered: Earth's Extremes **8.35** Digging Up Britain's Past **9.35** The Real Truth. Examining stress **10.40** Battle of Okinawa in Colour **11.50** Fall of Japan in Colour **1.00pm** Weathered: Earth's Extremes **1.35** Digging Up Britain's Past **2.35** The Real Truth **3.40** Battle of Okinawa in Colour **4.50** Fall of Japan in Colour **5.50** Digging Up Britain's Past. Bridgewater Canal **6.50** The Real Truth **7.55** Battle of Okinawa in Colour. The story of the fight for Okinawa **9.00** Fall of Japan in Colour. Examining the travels of war correspondent William Courtenay **10.00** The Real Truth. Examining the pros and cons of stress (2/6) **11.10** Weathered: Earth's Extremes **12.00** Battle of Okinawa in Colour **1.05am-2.00** Weathered: Earth's Extremes. Climate challenges

Sky Atlantic

6.00am Fish Town (r) **8.00** Billions (r) (AD) **10.15** House of the Dragon (r) (AD) **12.35pm** Homicide: Life on the Street (r) **2.30** Billions (r) (AD) **4.35** The Last of Us (r) (AD) **6.40** House of the Dragon (r) (AD) **7.45** House of the Dragon. Rhaenyra makes an attempt to strike a bargain with Rhaenys (r) (AD) **9.00** Station Eleven. Kirsten travels back to the apartment she shared with Jeevan and Frank to confront the source of her trauma (7/10) **10.00** Station Eleven. Kirsten arrives in Severn City to rescue the Travelling Symphony (8/10) **11.00** House of the Dragon. Rhaenyra grows desperate for a sign that she will prevail (r) (AD) **12.15am** House of the Dragon (r) (AD) **1.40** Billions (r) (AD) **3.40** The Guest Wing (r) (AD) **4.35** Sort Of (r) (AD) **5.05am-6.00** Urban Secrets (r)

Sky Docs

6.00am The 2010s (r) **7.00** Discovering: Glenn Close (r) (AD) **8.00** The Directors (r) (AD) **8.55** 100 Foot Wave (r) (AD) **10.55** Celtics City (r) (AD) **12.00** Enigma (r) **2.00pm FILM: Busby (PG, 2019)** (AD) **4.00** The Directors (r) (AD) **5.00** Discovering: Glenn Close. The life and career of the actor (r) (AD) **6.00** Queen of Speed (r) (AD) **8.00** Savage Mountain. The story of Kristin Harila's climb of the world's 14 highest mountains (r) (AD) **10.00 FILM: The Alpinist (12, 2021)** Documentary about climber Marc-André Leclerc (AD) **11.50** Williams & Mansell: Red 5. The rise of driver Nigel Mansell and the Williams F1 racing team (r) (AD) **1.40am FILM: Dave Not Coming Back (PG, 2020) 3.40** Nick Cave's Veiled World (r) **5.00am-6.00** Discovering: Glenn Close (r) (AD)

U&Yesterday

6.10am Abandoned Engineering (AD) **8.00** Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics (AD) **10.00** Great War Stories (AD) **11.00** The World at War **12.00** Antiques Roadshow **2.00pm** Bangers & Cash (AD) **4.00** Great War Stories (AD) **5.00** The World at War. Documentary series **6.00** Antiques Roadshow **7.00** A Perfect Planet. A look at the destabilising effect human activity is having on the Earth (AD) **8.00** Canal Boat Diaries. Robbie helps rescue a runaway boat on the Macclesfield Canal (7/10) (AD) **9.00** Canal Boat Diaries. From High Lane to Manchester (8/10) (AD) **10.00** Bangers & Cash (AD) **11.00** Bangers & Cash (AD) **12.00** Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics (AD) **1.00am** Find It, Fix It, Flog It **2.00** Abandoned Engineering (AD) **3.00am-6.10** Teleshopping

MindGames

Backgammon Chris Bray

UBC Contender finals

As a precursor to the world championships in Monte Carlo, the final rounds of the Ultimate Backgammon Championship (UBC) Contender tournament were completed. There was a different format this year with each player meeting the others four times each. Each match was to seven points with one point for the win and one point for the better performance rating (PR) in each match.

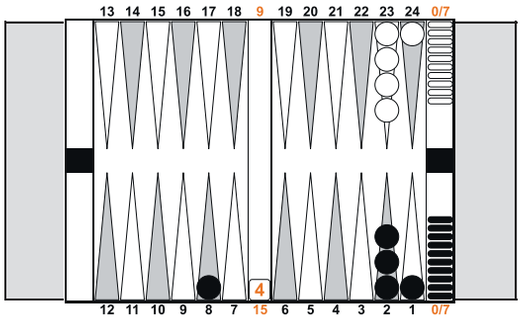
All four players acquitted themselves well, but both Marc Olsen (Denmark) and Oliver Squire (UK) made some very uncharacteristic errors. Marc tired towards the end of the two-day event, and he will not be happy when he comes to analyse his performance. This reminds us that to play top-class backgammon you need to be fit, both mentally and physically.

By the time the 11th round of matches started, Marc and Oliver had been eliminated and it was left to the two Japanese players to fight it out. This week's position shows the denouement from the match in which Michihito Kageyama (Michy), playing Black, had to win both the match and the PR against Hideaki Ueda to extend the tournament.

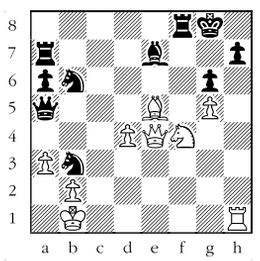
Holding a four-cube, Michy put the match on the line by redoubling to eight. Would you have redoubled as Black? Would you have taken as White? This is basically a three-roll ending, but one where both players can still fail to take checkers off with some rolls. For example, an immediate 43 by Black must be played 8/1 when he will still need three rolls to bear off his checkers.

XG has this right on the borderline, and both redouble and no redouble are correct. After the correct redouble from Michy and the easy take from Hideaki, Michy produced one of his worst numbers, 21, played 8/6, 1/off. Now he has lots of missing numbers next turn. However, Hideaki rolled double sixes and when Michy failed to roll his own set of boxes, the match was over and Hideaki had qualified to meet Zdenek Zizka in the autumn.

Hideaki's overall PR for the tournament was a staggering 2.45, which would qualify him as a super grandmaster. Michy was the next best on 2.95. Hideaki easily outplayed the other three and was a very worthy winner. *chrisbraybg@gmail.com*



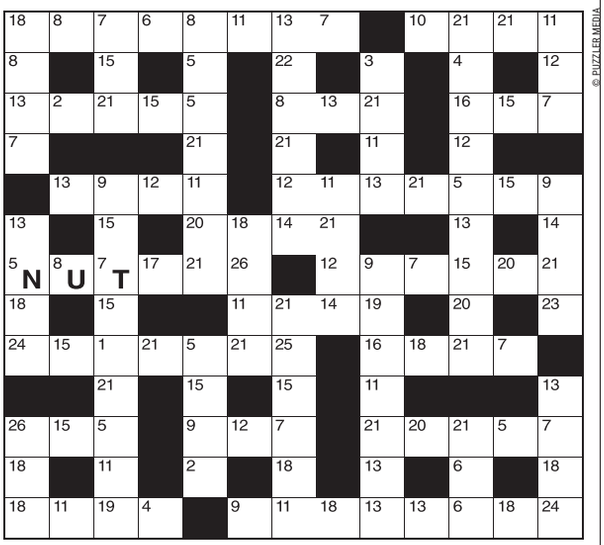
Winning Move



White to play.
This position is from Paravyan-Hnatyshyn, chess.com 2026.

As Bob Dylan once observed, "When you ain't got nothing, you got nothing to lose." While White ain't exactly got nothing, he is a rook and two pieces down and threatened with the loss of his queen (1 ... Nd2+). The time for conservative play is long gone. White needs to avoid entreaties not to panic and hit the desperation button now. How?

Codeword No 5919



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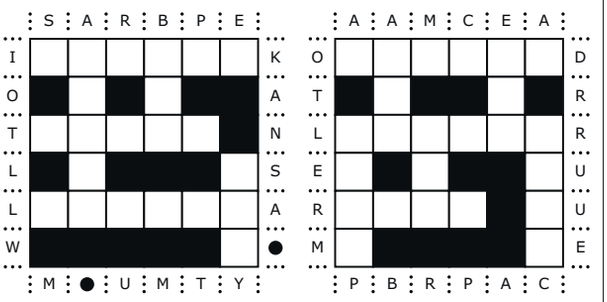
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13													
				N		T	U																		
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26													

Every letter in this crossword-style grid is represented by a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears in the grid at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out the identity of further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid until all 26 letters of the alphabet have been accounted for. Proper nouns are excluded. *Yesterday's solution, right*

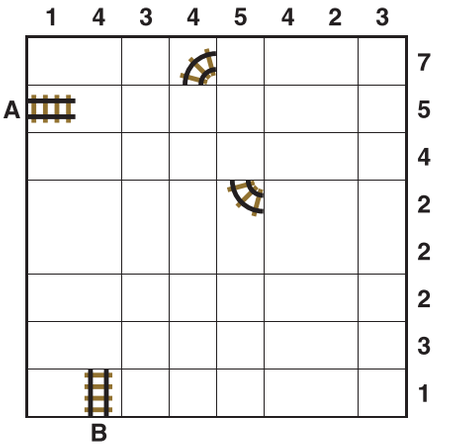
Clueline **Stuck on Codeword?** To receive 4 random clues call 0901 293 6262 or text TIMECODE to 64343. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. Texts cost £1 plus your standard network charge. For the full solution call 0905 757 0142. If you have an old newspaper and need clues from the past 7 days, call 0905 624 0024. Calls to 0905 cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm).

Lexica Easy No 9053 Hard No 9054



Slide the letters either horizontally or vertically back into the grid to produce a completed crossword. Letters are allowed to slide over other letters

Train Tracks No 2944



Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from village A to village B. The numbers indicate how many sections of track go in each row and column. There are only straight sections and curved sections. The track cannot cross itself.

Quintagram® No 2646

Solve all five **cryptic** clues using each letter underneath once only

1 Explorer tense on small bed (5)

_ _ _ _ _

2 Retired elitist collecting eastern relics? (5)

_ _ _ _ _

3 Very unusual hollow tin Roman god (6)

_ _ _ _ _ _

4 Half of tiny rubies reshaped for emperor (8)

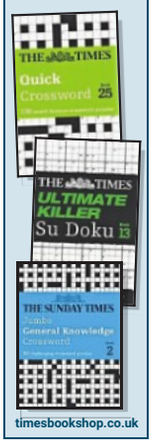
_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

5 Craft features at front of joint (8)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

A	A	B	B	C	C	E	E
H	I	I	I	L	N	N	O
O	P	R	R	S	S	S	S
S	T	T	T	T	U	U	V

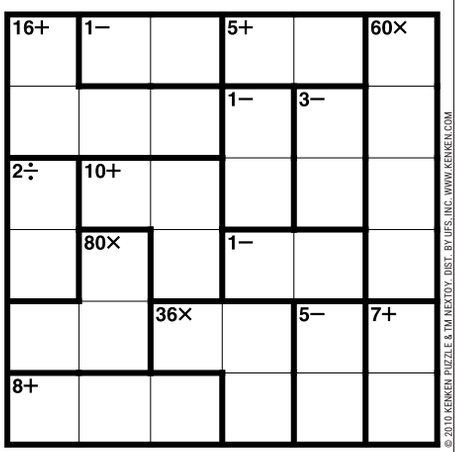
Challenge your mind with puzzle books from The Times



timesbookshop.co.uk

Solve Ponder crossword on Wednesdays and Fridays at thetimes.com/puzzles and on the Live app

KenKen Difficult No 6911



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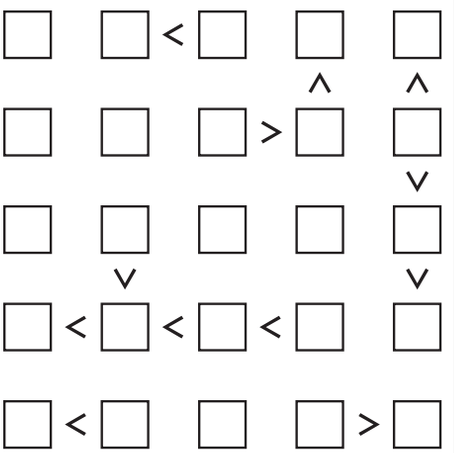
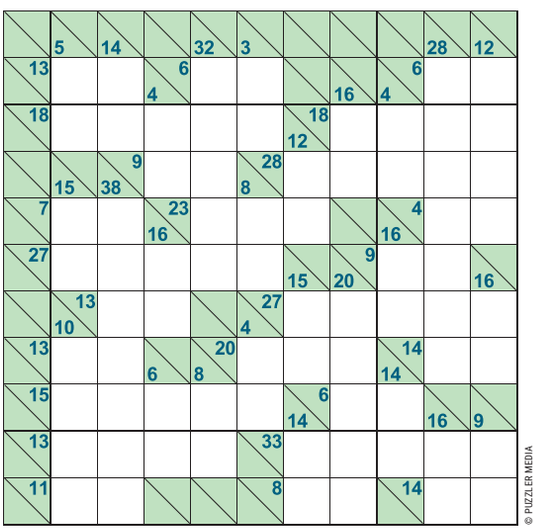
All the digits 1 to 6 must appear in every row and column. In each thick-line "block", the target number in the top left-hand corner is calculated from the digits in all the cells in the block, using the operation indicated by the symbol.

Futoshiki No 5459



Fill the blank squares so that every row and column contains each of the numbers 1 to 5 once only. The symbols between the squares indicate whether a number is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.

Kakuro No 4418



Fill the grid using the numbers 1 to 9 only. The numbers in each horizontal or vertical run of white squares add up to the total in the triangle to its left or above it. The same number may occur more than once in a row or column, but not within the same run of white squares.

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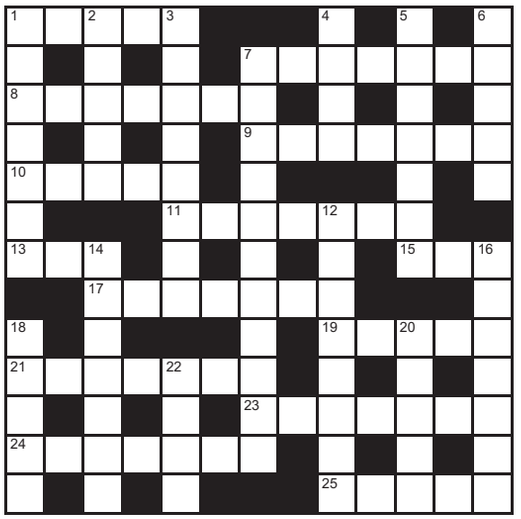
MindGames

times2 Crossword No 10,235



Across

1 Too high in pitch (5)
7 Of a bone of the lower leg (7)
8 Stiff dressmaking fabric (7)
9 Become happier (5,2)
10 Saturn's largest moon (5)
11 Steeped (herbs, eg) in liquid to extract flavour (7)
13 Pair of artistes (3)
15 Curving line (3)
17 Moves up and down as if on a pivot (7)
19 Stingy, penny-pinching (5)
21 Made of baked clay (7)
23 Devon coastal town (7)
24 Discourteous (7)
25 Tree with fragrant wood (5)

Down

1 Noticed, saw (7)
2 Thieves' jargon (5)
3 Multipurpose pocket tool (8)
4 Orchestra instrument (4)
5 Sunshine state of the USA (7)
6 Greyhound track's starting stalls (5)
7 Small towel (4,7)
12 Of a whole organisation and its processes (8)
14 Relative of the emu (7)
16 Baseball fielder (7)
18 Roman love goddess (5)
20 Marrow or squash, eg (5)
22 Possess, own (4)

Solution to Crossword 10,234

S	T	O	V	E		S	L	O	V	A	K	S
U		V		L		P		R		L		P
B	R	A	V	U	R	A		E	V	O	K	E
		T		C		R				H		C
	C	I	V	I	L	S	E	R	V	A	N	T
		O		D		E		E				R
C	A	N	V	A	S		D	I	V	I	N	E
Y				T		I		T		T		
C	L	E	V	E	R	C	L	E	V	E	R	
L		L				I		R		M		
O	L	I	V	E		C	R	A	V	I	N	G
N		D		T		L		T		S		U
E	L	E	V	A	T	E		E	V	E	R	Y

Need help with today's puzzle? Call 0905 757 0143 to check the answers. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

Bridge Andrew Robson

Top Twenty Conventions
3. Stayman

Actually the world-famous (for good reason) Stayman convention was invented by Sam Stayman's bridge partner George Rapee (and also, simultaneously, by the shy co-founder of the British Acol system Jack Marx, who never went public with it). Rapee (with whom I've teamed up — what a lovely man he was) told Stayman about his little idea and gave him permission to write it up in The Bridge World magazine in 1945. The rest, as they say, is history.

The Holy Grail of bidding is locating a four-four major-suit fit. Using natural methods, this is hard to do after partner opens 1NT. In Marx-Rapee (shall we call it that — just for fun?), a 2♣ response asks the 1NT opener to bid a four-card major (2♥ with both, 2♦ without either).

The big question is: "When should you bid Stayman?" To keep life simple for their students, teachers often say, "Game-going values (11 or more points facing a 12-14 1NT) with a four-card major."

Yes ... but you can bid Stayman without game-going values — as long as you can cater to opener's three replies. There are two hand-types for "Weak Stayman".

(a). Five-four in the majors. Pass if partner replies 2♥/♠; convert 2♦ to your five-card major. Actually, you should always bid Stayman with five-four in the majors, regardless of point-count.

(b). Five diamonds and three/four cards in both majors. Pass any reply.

Would you respond 2♣ Stayman with these?

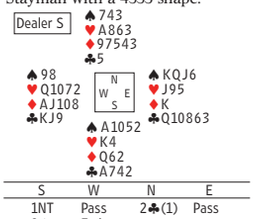
♠ J962	♠ A72	♠ 9842	♠ AKJ
♥ Q32	♥ J9865	♥ Q8432	♥ 9732
♦ 98532	♦ J874	♦ 5	♦ K108
♣ 3	♣ 8	♣ K74	♣ Q105

With the first, yes; pass any reply.

With the second, no. Make a 2♦ transfer (*see next Friday*).

With the third, yes — always bid Stayman with five-four in the majors. Pass a 2♥/♠ reply; convert 2♦ to 2♥.

With the fourth, no. Although you are game-going with a four-card major, you are sooo notrumpy and your four-card major is sooo poor that I wouldn't bother. As a guide, I'd say don't bid Stayman with a 4333 shape.



S	W	N	E
1NT	Pass	2♣(1)	Pass
2♠	End		

(1) Weak Stayman, able to pass any reply.

With dummy weak with (almost certainly) a ruffing value, this is a trump-leading auction. Trick one goes ♠9, ♠3, ♠J, ♠A. As declarer, you cash ♣A and ruff ♣2. You then cross to ♥K, back to ♥A and ruff ♥6. You now ruff ♣4 and lead ♥8. Whether or not East ruffs high, you must score your ♠10 and that's eight tricks.

andrew.robson@thetimes.co.uk

Brain Trainer

EASY 19	– 9	x 3	DOUBLE IT	+ 4	÷ 8	x 7	– 3	DOUBLE IT	– 11	ANSWER
MEDIUM 135	+ 10	x 8	DOUBLE IT	÷ 8	+ 40	x 3	DOUBLE IT	÷ 20	+ ⅓ OF IT	ANSWER
HARDER 130	x 3	+ 5	60% OF IT	– 7	-⅗ OF IT	HALVE IT	÷ 2	– 20	CUBE IT	ANSWER

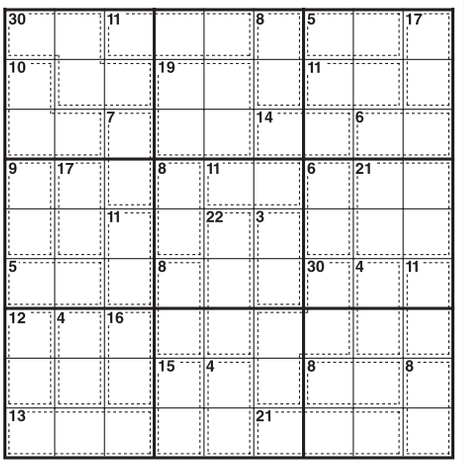
Polygon

From these letters, make words of **four** or more letters, always including the central letter. Answers must be in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, excluding capitalised words, plurals, conjugated verbs (past tense etc), adverbs ending in LY, comparatives and superlatives.
How you rate 13 words, average; 18, good; 22, very good; 26, excellent

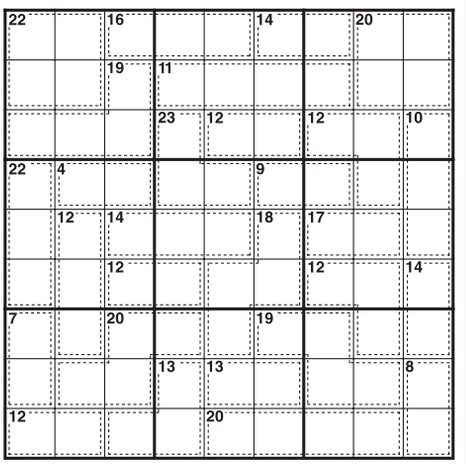
Yesterday's answers

aback, arak, award, back, **backward**, bard, bark, bawd, brack, brad, braw, carb, card, crab, craw, dark, drab, drack, draw, **drawback**, kara, rack, wack, wada, ward, wrack

Killer Moderate No 10,876



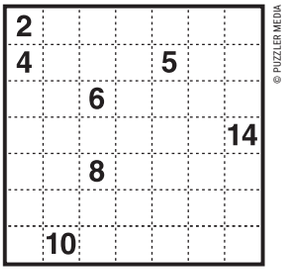
Killer Deadly No 10,877



As with standard Sudoku, fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.

Cluelines Stuck on Sudoku, Killer or KenKen? Call 0901 293 6263 before midnight to receive four clues for any of today's puzzles. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

Cell Blocks No 5802



Divide the grid into square or rectangular blocks, each containing one digit only. Every block must contain the number of cells indicated by the digit inside it.

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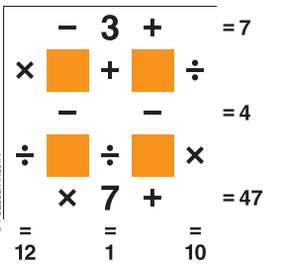
Set Square No 4421



Enter each of the numbers from 1 to 9 in the grid, so that the six sums work. We've placed two numbers to get you started. Each sum should be calculated left to right or top to bottom.

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Please note, BODMAS does not apply

Solutions

Quick Cryptic 3379

F	A	T	E		C	A	R	P	A	R	K	S
A		H			F		E		E		E	
C	O	U	N	S	E	L		R	I	F	L	E
E		M		C	O		S		I		M	
P	U	B	L	I	C	A	T	I	O	N		
A		N		T		S		E		F		
C	R	E	A	T	E		S	T	U	D	I	O
K		M		I		T		E		R		
	B	I	L	L	I	O	N	A	I	R	E	
P		A		L		R		C		N		C
A	O	R	T	A		I	N	E	R	T	I	A
S		G		T		N			E		S	
S	T	O	N	E	A	G	E		W	R	I	T

Codeword 5918

F	L	U	F	F	Y		G	A	L	L	O	P
O		N		A			U		E		I	
R	E	V		U	N	W	I	T	T	I	N	G
M		A		X		O		O			L	
E	A	R	N		T	R	I	C	Y	C	L	E
R		Y		S	K		R		A		T	
	I	N	C	E	S	S	A	N	T			
A		N		H		H		T		C		J
D	O	G	G	E	R	E	L		G	H	E	E
H				D		E		S		A		R
E	T	I	Q	U	E	T	T	E		B	U	S
R		C		L			A		L		E	
E	L	E	V	E	N		B	R	E	E	Z	Y

Kakuro 4417

	4	9		1	5		4	8	9
2	7	9	3	8	5	1	4	6
1	3	7		1	6		1	5
	1	6	2	3	4			8	3
		8	4		9	3		4	1
7	1			1	3		1	3	
9	7			1	5	2	9	8	
	2	4		6	8		8	3	9
	6	8	3	2	4	9	5	1	7
	4	9	1		1	8		2	6

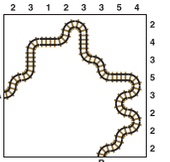
Sudoku 17,022

5	4	3	9	7	6	8	2	1
9	1	6	8	4	2	5	3	7
8	7	2	1	5	3	6	4	9
4	5	8	7	6	1	2	9	3
3	2	1	5	8	9	7	6	4
6	9	7	2	3	4	1	8	5
1	8	9	4	2	5	3	7	6
7	6	5	3	9	8	4	1	2
2	3	4	6	1	7	9	5	8

Tetonor 700

25	135	49	60
13 + 12	5 x 27	7 x 7	54 + 6
156	14	324	32
12 x 13	7 + 7	6 x 54	5 + 27
45	221	19	500
20 + 25	17 x 13	3 + 16	20 x 25
84	48	468	30
78 + 6	3 x 16	78 x 6	13 + 17

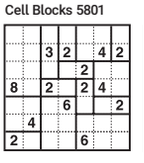
Train Tracks 2943



Sudoku 17,023

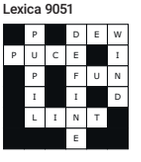
9	6	7	4	8	3	5	1	2
8	2	3	1	5	7	9	4	6
5	4	1	6	2	9	8	7	3
3	5	8	2	7	4	6	9	1
1	9	4	8	3	6	7	2	5
6	7	2	5	9	1	4	3	8
4	1	5	7	6	2	3	8	9
2	8	9	3	4	5	1	6	7
7	3	6	9	1	8	2	5	4

Cell Blocks 5801



Set Square 4420

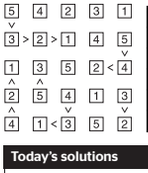
Lexica 9051



Sudoku 17,024

5	6	2	9	4	3	1	8	7
8	1	9	2	7	6	3	5	4
3	4	7	5	8	1	6	9	2
1	5	3	7	2	4	9	6	8
2	9	8	6	1	5	4	7	3
4	7	6	3	9	8	5	2	1
7	2	1	4	5	9	8	3	6
9	3	4	8	6	2	7	1	5
6	8	5	1	3	7	2	4	9

Futoshiki 5458



KenKen 6910

Lexica 9052

Killer 10,874

7	1	5	2	3	4	9	6	8
6	3	8	9	5	7	4	1	2
9	2	4	6	1	8	3	5	7
2	6	9	3	8	5	1	7	4
5	4	1	7	2	6	8	3	9
8	7	3	4	9	1	5	2	6
3	5	2	8	7	9	6	4	1
1	9	6	5	4	2	7	8	3
4	8	7	1	6	3	2	9	5

Killer 10,875

9	2	1	6	7	4	5	8	3
7	5	4	2	8	3	1	6	9
3	6	8	5	9	1	4	2	7
8	1	7	3	4	6	2	9	5
2	3	9	8	1	5	6	7	4
6	4	5	7	2	9	8	3	1
1	8	6	9	5	7	3	4	2
5	7	3	4	6	2	9	1	8
4	9	2	1	3	8	7	5	6

Today's solutions

Concise Quintagram
1 Robed
2 Caber
3 Sorbet
4 Tibetan
5 Debenture

Cryptic Quintagram
1 Scott
2 Bones
3 Vulcan
4 Tiberius
5 Starship

Sakuro 4820

Brain Trainer
Easy 95
Medium 132
Harder 27

Word watch

Keraunograph (a) An image impressed by lightning (*Collins*) **Compages** (b) A structure (*Chambers*) **Myelon** (b) The spinal cord (*Collins*)

Chess — Winning Move

After 1 Rxh7! White's firepower is sufficient to force the win, even though Black can capture the queen: 1 ... Nd2+ 2 Ka2 Qd5+ (the main point is that 2 ... Nxe4 3 Rg7+ Kh8 4 Nxg6 is mate) 3 Qxd5+! Nxd5 and now 4 Rg7+ Kh8 5 Nxg6 is again mate.

Quiz

1 Alan Partridge **2** English language **3** Cream **4** *Only Fools and Horses* **5** Nokia **6** Manchester, as in the Greater Manchester Police **7** Blackbeard or Edward Teach **8** Cardiac muscle or myocardium **9** 1919 to 1939 **10** *Favourite Worst Nightmare* **11** Guadalquivir **12** Beirut **13** *Facial Justice* **14** Golf **15** Art Malik

THE TIMES

14.08.26

MindGames

Word watch
David Parfitt

Keraunograph
a An image impressed by lightning
b A diagram for recording dance steps
c A device for measuring hair strength

Compages
a The countryside
b A structure
c Organisms aiding the decay of matter

Myelon
a A wild mountain sheep
b The spinal cord
c A synthetic fabric

Answers on page 15

Sudoku

Mild No 17,025

	4	2				8	1	
8			3		4			9
			7	9	8			
5	3						8	6
2	8		5	3	6		9	4
		6				5		
3	1		6		5		7	8

Difficult No 17,026

8		1						
		9	8		7			
			6			2		8
9		4			6			2
		2	5		1	3		
3			4			7		6
5		6			8			
			3		4	8		
						5		1

Fiendish No 17,027

		2				8		
							6	
5			1		8			3
		8		2		1		
	2			9	1			
9	7					2		
	4	3			2			6
		5	8	7				
			5			7		

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Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

The Times Daily Quiz
Olav Bjortomt

1 In 2020, a brass statue of which Steve Coogan character was temporarily erected in Norwich?

2 Henry Fielding accused poet laureate Colley Cibber of "High Crimes and Misdemeanors" against which language?

3 Strawberry fool is made with strawberries, lemon juice and which dairy product?

4 Del Boy falls through an open bar flap in the 1989 *Yuppy Love* episode of which sitcom?

5 Which Finnish company first introduced the game *Snake* on mobile phones in 1997?

SHUTTERSTOCK EDITORIAL

6 The GMP is a police force headquartered in the Newton Heath area of which English city?

7 Which English pirate's (d 1718) second-in-command was Israel Hands, who captained the sloop Adventure?

8 In the human body, what type of muscle forms part of the wall of the heart?

9 The subtitle of EH Carr's book *The Twenty Years' Crisis* refers to which interwar period?

10 Which 2007 Arctic Monkeys album features the singles *Brianstorm*, *Fluorescent Adolescent* and *Teddy Picker*?

11 Historically, Seville lies on the east bank of which river, the only major navigable river in Spain?

12 In 1995, the fashion designer Georges Hobeika opened his atelier in which Middle Eastern capital?

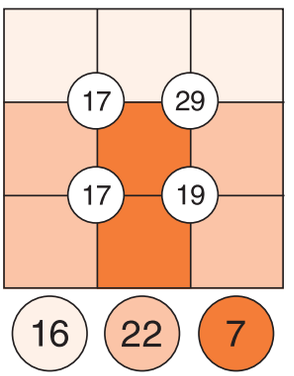
13 Which 1960 dystopian sci-fi novel by LP Hartley is set in the aftermath of a Third World War?

14 18Birdies is a mobile app for players of which sport?

15 Which British-Pakistani actor is pictured?

Answers on page 15

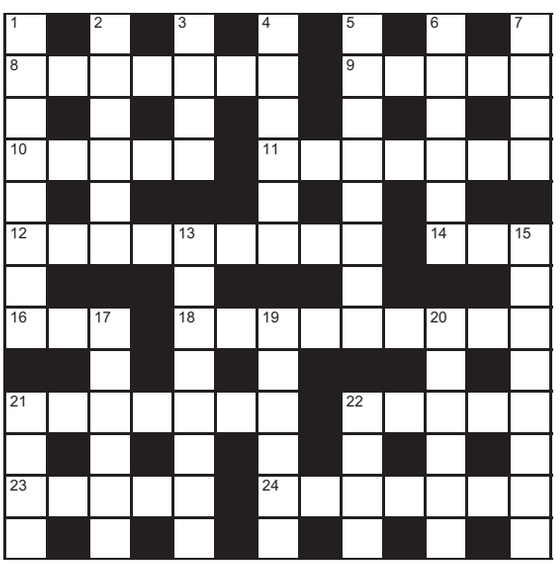
Sakuro
No 4820



Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct

For interactive puzzles visit thetimes.com

The Times Quick Cryptic
No 3380 by Cheeko



Across
8 Volume about exposed lives causing strong feeling (7)
9 Let everybody down essentially (5)
10 Understood diplomacy about India (5)
11 Protein in stale nuts (7)
12 Bury religious subgroup's cross (9)
14 Age fragment from triceratops (3)
16 Shade house periodically (3)
18 Shocking actor is out, mostly performing (9)
21 Writer's attitude Democrat forced on others (7)
22 Deputy colonel retreating — indication of hesitation (5)
23 Odd hint of dew on dam (5)
24 Sharp knife left in strange places (7)

Down
1 Accompanied fool, stopping when confused (4,4)
2 Animal in ancient times aboard ark? (6)
3 Reportedly selected northern Brit many moons ago (4)
4 Remove TV set up in vacated domicile (6)
5 Perform under girl in charge of a myriad of stars? (8)
6 Carefree couples starting blog itemise headlines (6)
7 Tense wife in couple (4)
13 Composition in D sharp you almost screwed up (8)
15 Company skilfully covering bungle up (8)
17 Naughty priest's wit (6)
19 Plant impetuous former princess breaks (6)
20 Hold old trophy in 100 years (6)
21 Area south of island state (4)
22 Youth boxes European first (4)

Yesterday's solution on page 15

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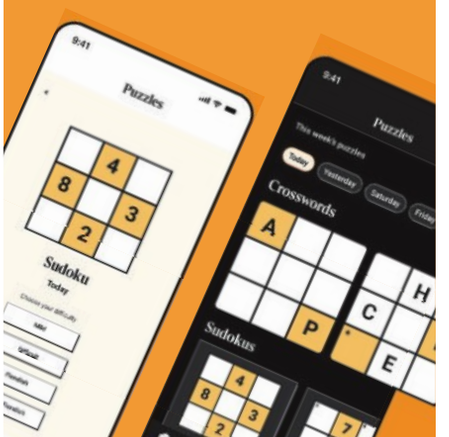


THE TIMES
THE SUNDAY TIMES

THE TIMES

FRIDAY AUGUST 14 2026

Bricks & Mortar

Inside

Aga saga The making of a middle-class icon **Page 6**

Plus

For sale, a vision Would you buy an architect's home? **Page 8**

Buy. Sell. Move. Improve. Your weekly property guide

Doing the honours

Everything you need to know about buying student property for your children

PROPERTY BAROMETER

39%

Burglary claims were up by this much between 2023-2025. The average claim value is £40,000, a 20 per cent increase

Source: Aviva Private Clients

Second home hotspots where cottages have fallen in value

The value of the average cottage in the UK is down 0.3 per cent

North Devon	-6.1%
Ceredigion	-6%
East Lindsey	-5.7%
Isle of Wight	-5.1%
Cotswold	-4.2%
East Devon	-3.9%
South Lakeland	-3.8%
Dorset	-3.3%
Torbay	-3.2%
East Suffolk	-2%
UK	-0.3%

Source: Zoopla

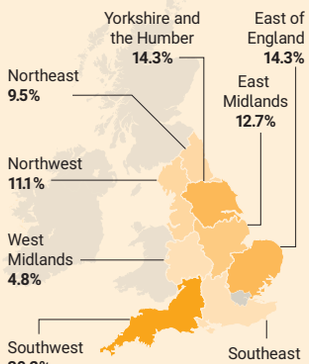
£24,598

A dedicated home gym or workout room is the most in-demand feature for new home buyers, adding this much in value to the average home

Source: UK Property Development

Holiday lets for sale

The proportion of holiday lets for sale in each region of England



Source: LandSale

106.7%

the stamp duty land tax bill for the average UK property has increased by this percentage over the past decade, while the typical house price has only increased by 28.4%

Source: Blick Rothenberg

Landlord sales are slowing

The percentage of sellers who are landlords from 2019 to 2026*

	Great Britain	London
2019	9.7%	18.2%
2020	10.4%	22.7%
2021	12.5%	23.4%
2022	12.5%	22.6%
2023	10.2%	22.2%
2024	10.9%	21.4%
2025	11.3%	20.9%
2026	9.2%	20.3%

*June. Source: Hamptons Research

Should you buy your child a student house?

Purchasing somewhere for your off-to-uni offspring may seem wise, says Jayne Dowle, but there are hidden costs to consider

It's a thought that crosses the mind of many a student parent. Rather than maxing out maintenance loans to pay rent on shabby student digs, why not buy your child a place to call their own?

If your offspring shares with friends, the rental income could cover the costs of their degree or fund the deposit on their first proper home.

Demand for decent private student lets is high, especially in prestigious university cities. As well as students, these cities are home to young professionals needing rental accommodation, an option after your student graduates.

"It depends on the location and what's already available for students," says Sophie Lang, the director and owner of the estate and letting agent Lang Llewellyn & Co. "It's generally more expensive for students to rent than the private rented sector, but purpose-built student accommodation [PBSA] can dominate a local market. However, in my experience, students prefer the private rented sector [where] they live as a family."

A student-orientated investment is also less exposed to changing markets than holiday cottages, for example, which are increasingly subject to falling occupation rates and punishing local authority rules.

Here are the points to consider, from the fun stuff to hard financial facts.

£400
Students' average monthly rent to parents or guardians

£7,500
Annual allowance you can earn tax-free through the Rent a Room scheme

Is it right for your family?

This is a family decision, including any other children you have — could you afford to do it for them all? Also, some young people feel uncomfortable acting as a de facto landlord to their friends.

If it's a long degree course, it makes more sense than if they are on a sandwich course with years abroad or placements. If your student offspring moves out after 12 months, would you be prepared to seek new tenants?

"Another big thing is, would you keep it on as a student let after your child had graduated, or revamp and offer it to a wider demographic?" Lang asks.

Think about practicalities too. Unless you want to be on call 24/7, you'll need a dependable local letting agent with a property management arm. Plus, rent is taxable income, so taking rent from your student's housemates may push you up a tax band.

How to choose the right property

Start looking as soon as you decide — don't wait for the next academic year to loom. The number of bedrooms is crucial too, because of HMO (houses in multiple occupation) rules. These vary around the UK, but in England and Wales, if at least three tenants live there, forming more than one household and sharing amenities such as lavatory, bathroom and kitchen, a property becomes an HMO. It is then subject to certain regulations and must be licensed.

However, if you choose a smaller property, your student can take in friends as paying tenants, or as lodgers under the government's Rent a Room scheme, which allows tax-free earnings up to a threshold of £7,500 per year.

"We are doing this in Leeds for our son," one parent says. "He is the owner occupier and has a lodger agreement with his friend. We went for two bedrooms to avoid HMO rules and our son only wanted to share with one other person."

Nicholas Finn, managing director of Garrington Property Finders, highlights a difference between overseas and domestic buyers. While the latter tend to wait until their student is halfway through the first year of halls before deciding to buy, the former act in advance: "In locations such as Oxford, Cambridge and London, where capital values will be highest, there is that mindset of 'my child will be studying in the UK, give them somewhere with no distractions, let them focus on what's almost a job of getting a degree'," he says.

Remember you won't live there

Aside from providing brand-new-with-warranties appliances, ensuring the bathroom is well appointed and that furniture is modern, remember that today's late teens/twentysomethings love a vibrant colour palette, says the renters' blogger Ammarah Hasham.

"Avoid anything frilly around the beds, shaggy rugs and clunky furniture, and focus on good lighting, preferably wireless, compact storage solutions and easy-to-maintain flooring," she says.

Keeping pace with swanky PBSAs that offer dining rooms, cinema rooms and rooftop gyms, the best private student rentals are now indistinguishable from grown-up properties.

But not all — 41 per cent of students think their university home is poor value for money, rising to 49 per cent of those renting from a private landlord, according to the money advice website Save the Student's latest National Student Accommodation Survey.

Who's in charge: student landlord or letting agent?

Is asking a young person to be landlord a recipe for stress or a real opportunity for adulting?

Even if you employ a good agent, there can be challenges. One student landlord says that everything ran smoothly until the letting agent took longer than the legal requisite of ten days in England and Wales (different schemes operate in Scotland and Northern Ireland) to return tenant deposits at the end of the tenancy.

"We've heard that because it's a friend who's the landlord, sometimes housemates haven't been quick to pay the rent," says Zoe Cooke, 51, mother of four daughters, and co-owner of the 99,000-strong student parent advice Facebook group What I Wish I Knew About University (WIWIKAU).

"It's too much for a young person having that on their shoulders," she says. "I do know families who have done it, and I wouldn't say the parents would be quick to do it again."

How to find the best source of funds

There are three typical routes, says Mark Harris, chief executive of the mortgage broker SPF Private Clients.

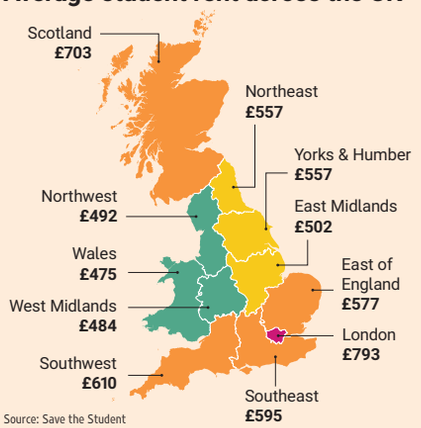
- **Buying as a second home** Parents could purchase the property as a second home and let their child stay there. The

Buy-for-uni mortgages

- **Vernon Building Society** It is possible to borrow up to 100 per cent of the property price, which is supported by the parents, who will be joint borrowers. Where there is a deposit of less than 20 per cent, cash must be deposited in a Vernon BS savings account, or a charge placed over the parents' property.
- **Bath Building Society** The mortgage will be in the joint names of the student and parent(s), but the property can be owned solely by the student, to avoid additional stamp duty liability. As well as the parents' support, Bath BS will also consider rental income from the other rooms towards affordability.
- **Loughborough Building Society** Loughborough BS will lend up to 100 per cent of the property's value. Loans greater than 80 per cent need security through other means. This includes savings, allowing family members to use their money to help the borrower without having to give the money to them.

COVER IMAGE: CREATIVE CONCEPT BY DAVID RILEY, IMAGE REALISED BY GEMINI. BELOW: ADOBE STOCK

Average student rent across the UK



Source: Save the Student

"level of lend" is based on the income of the applicant/s, also taking in assessment of their main residence.

"If you wish to let rooms, it is best to consult with the lender, but it should allow the property to have lodgers," Harris says.

As it is a second home, there will be increased stamp duty to pay, 3 per cent above base, even if the property itself is below the threshold of £125,000.

● **Buy-to-let (BTL)** "You could purchase as a BTL, but should you require a mortgage and intend for your child to live there, this would be deemed a regulated loan," says Harris — typical BTL mortgages are unregulated as there is no personal residency.

Regulated BTL mortgages are typically sourced via small building societies such as Furness, Marsden and Swansea. "However, products of this ilk tend not to be underwritten with rental income used to govern the level of lend, but are affordability/income based," Harris warns.

Buying an HMO impacts the mortgage products available, Harris adds, as products are typically more expensive and less available. He also highlights a select number of products specifically designed for student property investing, so-called Buy for Uni mortgages.

● **Buying in your child's name** "This is done via a joint borrower/sole proprietor [JBSP] mortgage," Harris explains. "The parents' income is used in underwriting to boost the level of borrowing while not being named on the property deeds.

"JBSP mortgages are increasingly available and high loan-to-values are achievable. Also, there is the consideration for where any deposit is sourced," Harris says. "The Bank of Mum and Dad may gift the deposit but some may loan the deposit or even consider a second charge loan on their main/another property."

However, if the property is put in the young person's name, they won't be able to take future advantage of the first-time buyers' government bonus from an existing Help to Buy Isa or Lifetime Isa (Lisa), or first-time buyers' stamp duty relief.

Consider other costs

Lots of student properties are rented with all bills included. However, most include an annual spending limit on gas, electric, water and wifi.

When that limit has been met, tenants must foot the shortfall. This should be clearly outlined in the tenancy agreement, Cooke says.

You will pay increased buildings insurance costs as rooms are let out, depending on the size, postcode and factors such as security measures.

Property compliance costs vary by location and property. An Electrical Installation Condition Report typically costs £100-£300 and is valid for five years, while an annual Gas Safety Certificate usually costs £80-£180. All work must be carried out by qualified professionals.

The property will need an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC), typically costing £80-£150 and valid for ten years. The minimum rating for private rentals in England and Wales is band E, with band C required by October 2030. Scotland has no legal minimum EPC rating for domestic rentals, although minimum energy efficiency requirements apply. Licensing requirements and costs for HMOs vary between local authorities.

You will also need fire alarms, smoke alarms, carbon monoxide alarms and locks on internal doors.

Students are not liable for council tax. However, if the property is bought as a second home in your name, the local authority may levy an extra charge.

Know the new tenancy rules

If your student has tenants, you will need a tenancy agreement. With professional support from a specialist landlord and tenant solicitor, this typically costs about £100-£300, depending on property and location, according to ARLA Propertymark.

Be aware of the May 2026 Renters' Rights Act, which replaces fixed-term tenancies with rolling periodic agreements, called an assured periodic tenancy (APT), meaning students can leave with two months' notice. This is important if your student has tenants.

With student-only HMOs, landlords rely on what's known as Ground 4A to regain possession of shared student properties for the next academic year, requiring a standard four-month notice period and written pre-tenancy warning, explains Kim Lidbury, president of ARLA Propertymark. This matters if you continue to own an HMO after your own student graduates.

What £2.5 million buys you in …

London W11

The Submariner's House is a two-bedroom mews house on a Notting Hill cobbled street so picturesque it was used for the famous scene where Mark reveals his love for Juliet using cue cards in *Love Actually*. Purpose-built shelving zones off the living area from the home study, then a red concrete staircase leads up to a Scandi-style bedroom with a large skylight above the bed for stargazing. There is a guest bedroom and a roof terrace.

EPC D (potential B) — on a scale from A (best) to G (worst)
Upside Stylish sought-after mews.
Downside A magnet for influencers and film fans.
Contact winkworth.co.uk

Buckinghamshire

As seen on *Grand Designs*, this slick Thames-side home is on Lock Island, a private island downstream from the chichi town of Marlow. Designed by Baca Architects ten years ago, the four-bedroom property sits on the riverbank on fixed foundations; in case of a flood it rises up in its own wet dock and floats. Inside, an open-plan lounge/kitchen/diner opens onto a terrace, cinema/games room and utility room. The first floor is arranged as a principal suite with a dressing room, en suite and hammam.

EPC C (current and potential)
Upside A future-proof amphibious house (plus a private mooring).
Downside No vehicular access.
Contact hamptons.co.uk

Bath

In Lyncombe Hill, overlooking the city, the Priory is a grade II listed five-bedroom Victorian house in charming Tudor-gothic style. It has a grand entrance hall, a conservatory and a self-contained apartment. Period features include cornicing, original fireplaces and a sweeping Georgian staircase.
Outside there is a balcony and a rear terrace in landscaped gardens.
Bath Spa railway station is a five-minute walk over the Avon.

EPC E (potential C)
Upside The landscaped gardens have won a gold award at Bath in Bloom.
Downside Listed properties can be more difficult to renovate.
Contact knightfrank.co.uk

ANDY MCCANDLISH

Offers over £2.5 million

Or… a private island on Loch Lomond

Inchconnachan is a 100-acre private island set within Loch Lomond. It's richly wooded with Scots pine, oak and birch trees. Despite this, it's a half-hour drive to Glasgow airport. There is planning permission for a three-bedroom lodge with a boathouse and jetty, alongside paths, boardwalks, drainage and plant facilities. Buyers will need to manage the build themselves for £2.5 million, or can pay £9.5 million and leave it to someone else.

EPC N/A
Upside A well-connected hideaway.
Downside However you do it, you'll need deep pockets to complete the build.
Contact sothebysrealty.co.uk

I moved to Greece for low taxes and found a better work-life balance

The millionaire trader Lewis Crompton swapped London for Athens to escape burnout

When people ask what it's like living in Glyfada, southern Athens, I tell them that the best version of myself isn't when I'm in the UK, it's when I'm here in Greece [*says Lewis Crompton, 36*].

About three months ago I made the move from a traditional country house in Norfolk to a modern apartment in Athens. I grew up in north London and, having lived in the UK my whole life, I needed a change. Though I was a bit apprehensive it has proved worth it in terms of my investments, my company and my lifestyle.

You may recognise me from the Channel 5 show *Rich House, Poor House*, a programme dedicated to exploring Britain's wealth divide. I did not come from wealth and started working at a very young age. Both of my parents were teachers and I saw how hard they worked, particularly my dad, who worked weekends on top of his regular workload just to make ends meet and afford a holiday.

Witnessing that struggle instilled in me the work ethic I have today. I just never knew where to start but I knew I wanted to have money. My journey has been a rocky one, taking me from the church to sales before I founded my own company, Star Trading, which I now run from Greece.

Learning to master the skills of trading helped immensely. After seven months I was able to leave my job and begin trading. I discovered trading by mistake. I signed up and attended a financial market trading seminar and I was sold. It has completely changed my life.

The transition took about six years, but it was totally worth it. I now live on the coast in Glyfada. The sun shines for more than 250 days a year. I get to see the sunset over the water every single night. Everyone here is more relaxed and I am adopting that much more.

The biggest difference is what it has done to me physically. Being from London, I was on edge all the time. My nervous system was never recovering and I had given myself chronic fatigue symptoms a couple of years ago. I was always riding that edge of burnout. Greece has allowed me to pause and relax.

Lewis Crompton

There are real benefits here in terms of my businesses' tax efficiency. I still pay my taxes in the UK: VAT, corporation tax, all of that. But my personal income is counted as passive income, meaning it is taxed at a lower rate.

Greece also has a progressive tax system with lowered taxes for new residents. I am very happy paying tax but I now get to pay lower tax and live in the sunshine. You do need to understand the rules of the tax system if you're going to make big life decisions like this.

Nothing is permanent. You could always move back if it doesn't work out. I have friends in Dubai who, if they return to the UK within five years, would face a bill for all the tax accumulated during their years away. That would be a very hefty sum. Coming to Greece, knowing I can return without that happening, has given me peace of mind.

> I am very happy paying tax but I now get to pay less and live in the sunshine

When I first planted the idea with friends and family, the reaction was very negative. I was asked, "Why would you leave?" many times. With time they have come to understand and some are now planning to leave the UK themselves. There has been a complete change in perception about leaving. It is more on the radar than it has ever been.

Sunday is the perfect day in Glyfada. I love a Sunday afternoon party. Glyfada isn't perfect, but life here compared with the UK feels like a detox, and that feels like more than enough.

Interview by Hodan Sultan

Landlords, say goodbye to upfront lettings fees.

Kinleigh Folkard & Hayward

As tenancies go monthly, so do our fees.

Many London landlords pay their lettings fees upfront, our complete lettings service is now covered by your monthly rent.

Rental returns in days, not months.

Learn more

Tenancy set up fees still apply, see terms and conditions at kfh.co.uk/monthly-billing

Riverstone

Two properties sold per week in 2026

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Under this offer, the Deferred Fee accrues at 8% per annum, capped at 40%. For full Terms & Conditions scan the QR code.

AGA; PHOTO 12/GETTY IMAGES

Above left: Aga Compact 100 in white, from £9,500. Above: Aga Signature in raspberry with an extension module, from £16,500 and the module from £2,500

A real Aga saga: the making of a classic

Made in Telford, dreamt about by Middle England, the Aga has been hand-built in the UK for nearly a century — although they aren't fired by solid fuel anymore. By Sasha Nugara

'You've got to put ear plugs in," warns David Carpenter, Aga's manufacturing director. "So that you can't hear me." He is only half joking — the noise inside Aga's Telford factory is relentless, as machines whir, metals clang and the high-powered ventilation forces out hot, clammy air. We're entering the enamel shop, the start of the 20-hour process taken to hand-build each Aga.

Here big tubs of coloured enamel are mixed in specialised chambers designed to keep out the dust. It looks just like paint, but, as Carpenter tells me, it's not that simple. "Enamel is basically silica or glass," he explains, dropping a pile of little glass pieces in my hand. "We spray that on with a gun. You think, well, how do you spray that on? For 24 hours [it's ground] into a very fine paste."

It's mixed with Cornish clay, pigment, oxides and ceramic balls to create a slip, a liquid mix of clay and water. This is then sprayed over the raw cast-iron plates, sourced from foundries in Spain, France, Hungary and Dudley in the West Midlands. "It's a very manual process — it requires a lot of skill to put the right amount on," he says.

Carpenter has been working at the factory in Telford, Shropshire, for 31 years, after starting as a design and development manager in the 1990s. Since then he has helped to pioneer the shift from fuel-powered to electric ovens. "An old Aga, you couldn't turn it on and off. It was on 24 hours a day. You'd have to open the windows, the doors, everything."

The Aga cooker was invented in 1922 in Sweden by Dr Gustaf Dalen, who had won a Nobel prize in physics. Having been blinded after a chemical explosion, he spent more time at home and realised how exhausting it was for his wife constantly having to stoke, clean and monitor their solid-fuel stove.

Dalen developed a cast-iron stove that would run continuously and radiate heat evenly, requiring little maintenance. (The letters in Aga stand for Aktiebolaget Gas Accumulator, basically translating as Gas Accumulator Ltd.) In 1929 the Aga was introduced in the UK, where it quickly became the hallmark of upper-middle class English country life.

Traditionally a chunky piece of cast iron in the centre of the oven would be stoked with solid fuel (later oil and gas) to distribute heat to the ovens and hot plates. The Aga would have to be left on, stoked several times a day (depending on how much you were cooking), and mishaps were frequent — if your Aga went out it would take 24 hours to reheat.

About 15 years ago the company developed an electrical element so each oven and hot plate had its own power source, controlled by a computer. The change was fuelled by environmental concerns and rising energy bills. It took 18 months to develop the technology.

Carpenter shows me the electrical element that makes it tick. "We put a hole in the top of the oven. We put an element in the top, but instead of just doing a normal electric element it's cast iron. It's a bit like heating up a brick, it holds the temperature for a long time. We then had to develop a computer to switch it on and off." Instead of needing to leave the Aga on all day, the hot plates take ten minutes to heat up, and the oven about 40 minutes.

A 1950s Aga advert, left; the enamelling process, right

Above: Aga Classic 100 with three cast-iron ovens and twin hot plates in mustard, from £13,500. Below: Aga Mini in olivine, from £7,500

The cast-iron framework has barely changed. A factory worker explains: "It's all based on the same chemistry and the same kind of ethos that it's always been — sticking glass to cast iron. It's [not changed] a lot. Obviously the machines in here, the way people spray things — we've altered things over time. It's a lot cleaner in here now than it used to be."

After the pieces of cast iron have been sprayed they're sent into furnaces to be fired at more than 800C. When they emerge from the oven the enamel ripples across the cast iron as if the liquid will drip off, prevented from doing so by the clay element in the slip.

It takes at least an hour for them to cool down before quality checking; even the tiniest mark or air bubble will be rejected, and the enamel will be shot-blasted off and reapplied.

Of the 18 colours available, the raspberry shade causes the most issues. "It has a very high oxide content," the worker explains. "When you have a higher oxide content you get what's called a white dot and the oxide doesn't quite dissolve and it causes a white spot in the raspberry. "We have it slightly with the aubergine as well, which is another with very high oxide content."

After all the pieces have been fired and approved they go onto the assembly line where the colours are checked, and the door catches and plugs are fitted by hand by the factory's 60-70 workers, who frequently rotate jobs along the production line.

We still associate an Aga with classic country living, but you can no longer buy an always-on, fuel-powered Aga, although Carpenter estimates that there are 100,000 still in use around the UK. The owners of these can trade them in and receive up to 10 per cent off their next oven.

"I think the Aga conveys a sense of place and feel," says Dominic Worsley, the managing director of Aga Rangemaster. "It's a cooker, but it also conveys a lifestyle and [there's] definitely a section of people who want them because they want that country cottage look.

"It's such an incredible product and I think it's fallen off people's radars a little bit. People think they're beautiful products but probably quite difficult to own and use, and I think that's the biggest misconception. We want to show people the simplicity and the delight of owning an Aga today and how easy it is to use."

You don't need a sprawling home with an impressively large kitchen to fit an Aga. The Mini Cast Iron 60 model (£7,500) is 60cm wide, and the three-door Aga Compact (£9,500) is 90cm wide.

Worsley grew up on the outskirts of Birmingham with an Aga. "My mum loved cooking on it, and I remember loads of really amazing family meals."

He learnt how to cook on one, remembering dodgy, oversalted mashed potatoes made for his sister during the school holidays, and now with his new Aga in his Oxfordshire home he has refined his skills.

"The first thing I cooked in mine was a shoulder of lamb overnight. It won't overcook — you can put it in at ten o'clock the night before and eat it for lunch the next day, and it'll just get better and better. It just tastes phenomenal."

> The Aga was invented in 1922 by Swede Dr Gustaf Dalen, who had won a Nobel prize in physics

He says cooking in cast-iron ovens is a gentle process. "It's incredibly forgiving actually. If you leave something in a little bit too long it won't suddenly burn because you're not [forcing hot air over food], which tends to dehydrate it. With an Aga you're keeping all the steam in, and because it's radiant heat it's preserving more nutrients, it keeps more of the flavour, which is why people talk about an Aga taste when they're cooking."

Britain's oldest printed wallpaper to go on display

Hidden fragments of the Tudor paper were discovered by workmen at a Cambridge college. By Donna Ferguson

The oldest known example of printed wallpaper lay hidden under the plaster ceiling of a Cambridge college building for centuries. Dating from the early 16th century, the black-and-white patterned paper is thought to have been influenced by Islamic designs and epitomises the moment when wallpaper emerged as an alternative to tapestry.

Priceless fragments of the paper, which will be on display for the first time next month, were discovered by workmen who were replastering the ceiling of the master's lodge of Christ's College, Cambridge, in 1911. The intricate design had been printed using carved wooden blocks on the back of a proclamation announcing the accession of King Henry VIII to the throne.

This allowed experts to date the wallpaper to around 1509, making it the earliest known example of printed wallpaper, and of paper being used for decorative purposes on a wall. The delicate fragments have never been seen in public before. Along with other college "treasures" — such as the mummified remains of four 16th-century rats — they will be exhibited to the public for the first time in the college library during the Open Cambridge festival, which takes place from September 11-20.

The wallpaper shows how quickly print emerged as a medium for both communication and decoration in England, after William Caxton set up his printing press in Westminster in 1476. The design displays the mark of Hugo Goes, who established the first printing press in York and was known to have printed royal proclamations.

It is likely that the company printed the design on the back of a proclamation to reduce costs: paper was an expensive luxury in the 16th century and needed to be imported to England.

Dr Harriet Lyon, a lecturer in history at Christ's, says wallpapering the ceiling may have been a way of saving money and time on decoration at the end of a lengthy project to build the lodge, which is one of the oldest buildings in the college. "Painting a ceiling by hand takes a very skilled person a long time," she says.

The property needed an opulent decor because it was intended to accommodate Lady Margaret Beaufort, Henry VIII's grandmother, who had founded the college in 1505.

The striking design features a fashionable pomegranate motif, similar to those seen in Islamic textiles between the 14th and early 16th centuries. "It shows how — at a time we sometimes think there's not that much contact between cultures — there is, in fact, a trade in textiles and a shared visual language used in things like wallpaper," Lyon says. "These were the designs coming in from the Islamic world."

Having a cosmopolitan familiarity with such exotic designs was a marker of wealth and status. "These kinds of foreign influences, I think, would have been seen as pretty cool — the sort of thing that only elite households and institutions would really have been reproducing," Lyon says.

JONATHAN YADIN/ALAMY; VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON

Left: Christ's College, Cambridge. Above: Henry VIII

The fragments were found on the back of a proclamation. Below: a reconstruction by Horace Warner of Jeffrey & Co

It is thanks to the diligence of the workmen who uncovered the fragments on the ceiling beams and joists in 1911 that the wallpaper was preserved, according to a firsthand account from the then master of Christ's, Arthur Shipley.

After being alerted by the foreman to the discovery he went to inspect the ceiling with an expert from the university library that evening and discovered the wallpaper had been cleared away. Shipley wrote: "This seemed to be a terrible disaster. We thought that the workmen had simply brushed the fragments off; but I had underestimated the ability of the British workman... On coming down to the lodge next morning I found that every fragment of paper had been most carefully removed and preserved."

By 1712 wallpaper had become so popular among the upper classes that the British government decided to impose a tax on manufacturers of patterned, printed or painted wallpaper, pushing up prices for consumers. "The tax comes in and, like all these measures, is wildly unpopular," Lyon says. People began buying plain paper and, after hanging it, would either stencil or paint it by hand. "It led to a sort of illicit home industry."

The wallpaper tax was eventually abolished in 1836, which coincided with advances in mechanical paper production and colour printing, leading to a wallpaper boom in Britain.

"I think it's quite special to be able to display an example of wallpaper so early and rare and unusual in its day, given that we're now so used to seeing wallpaper everywhere we go," Lyon says.

There is also much greater interest in Tudor material culture than there used to be. "We've been thinking about the treasures from our collection we're keen to show the public," she says. "I think material culture, like wallpaper fragments, is something that the public can really connect to and imagine."

ROB CRAWFORD FOR AUCOOT

▲ Pine House in Peckham features a double-height kitchen and living space

COURTESY OF THE MODERN HOUSE

▶ Ty Hedfan ("the hovering house"), built by the architects Sarah Featherstone and Jeremy Young

Design darlings

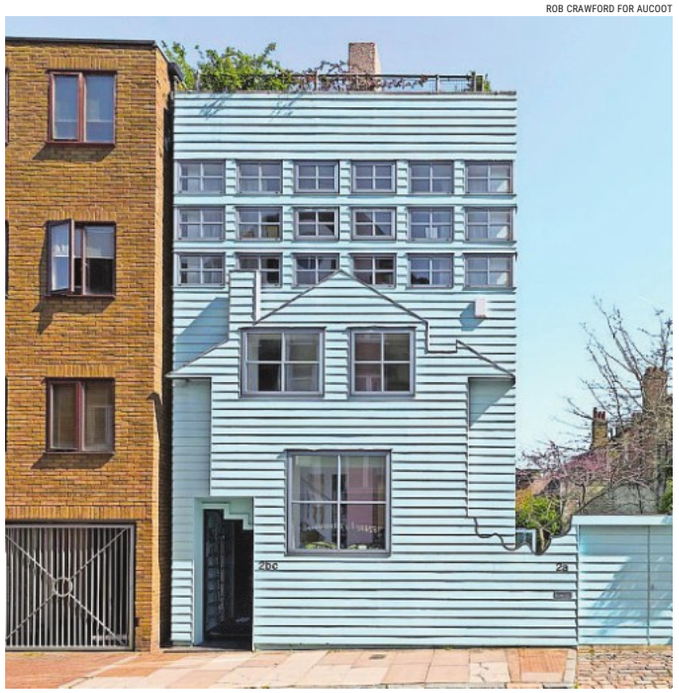
When an architect's home hits the market — would you buy it? Elizabeth Winding looks at some of the most unusual houses for sale now

As a USP, it takes some beating: a house that an architect has not only designed but designed as their own home, free of the usual client caveats and creative differences. "When you design a house for your own needs, you can be quite radical in your decision-making," says Corey Hemingway, cofounder of Hemingway+K estate agents. "It's like walking into an architect's mind — and that's often a fascinating place."

There are some extraordinary examples, from Sir John Soane's eccentric London townhouse, complete with a crypt and mock monk's tomb, to Philip Johnson's weekend retreat in Connecticut, a minimalist glass box in the woods that did away with walls (and privacy).

Most examples on the market are a little less extreme, but they're still an intriguing prospect for buyers and agents alike. Louise Willocks is managing director at The Modern House, which specialises in design-led sales and modernist architecture. "An excitement ripples through the office when we're asked to sell an architect-owned home," she says. "They may have appeared in the press, but only a handful of people

ROB CRAWFORD FOR AUCOOT



Blue House in Hackney, east London, stands out for its pale-blue painted façade and fibre-cement "clapboard" finish. The east London property was designed by the architect Sean Griffiths

DAN GLASSER FOR HEMINGWAY+K

▲ The Drift in Suffolk is the home of the architect Marcus Lee and the curator Corinna Dean

▼ Percy Weston's family home, Peckham House

ROB CRAWFORD FOR AUCOOT

will have experienced them in real life. They're often unique and experimental."

The Modern House has handled the sales of numerous high-profile examples, including Berthold Lubetkin's visionary, grade I listed north London penthouse, where he lived with his family and dalmatian (who made an elegant addition to the marketing, dozing on the living room's white rug). Notable for its expansive views and 40ft vaulted living room, the two-bedroom flat sold for £2 million back in 2017.

More contemporary examples on their books include Ty Hedfan ("the hovering house"), built by the architects Sarah Featherstone and Jeremy Young on the site of an old sawmill near Brecon. Listed at £895,000, it's a five-bedroom affair, designed on ecological Passivhaus principles, with a double-height, cantilevered living space over the River Ysgir. It's a house where every window, large and small, seems to frame the surrounding landscape. "Being over the river was always important to us," Featherstone says. "But we weren't so aware that we'd also be in among the trees. When the sun's out, dappled shadows just dance across the room."

Crafted details, unsurprisingly, are a hallmark of architects' own homes — and one that applies regardless of the scale, according to Hemingway. Her agency is marketing the architect Nicholas Ashby's flat, a one-bedroom, 515 sq ft Victorian conversion in Brixton. At £400,000, it's by far the cheapest property on their books, but Hemingway doesn't care. "It's as exquisite as any multimillion home that I've represented in terms of its finish," she says, pointing to the detailing: the eucalyptus-faced joinery, the oak-finger parquet and the tiny aluminium flowers that punctuate the panelling (one of Ashby's signature motifs). "You won't find those things in a new development — they're there because the architect built it for himself."

It's a similar story at Percy Weston's family home, Peckham House. On the market with Aucoot, it comes with a guide price of £1.25 million, a brace of architectural awards and — beyond its latticed brick façade — all kinds of crafted details, most handmade by Weston and his practice's cofounder, Tom Surman. Perhaps most striking is the end-grain parquet floor, made from ceiling-joist offcuts of English larch. (The Barbican has something similar, made from Douglas fir.) It involved cutting thousands of blocks, followed by countless hours of sanding; the saw had shifted slightly, it turned out, so they weren't all perfectly square. The result is striking, even if — as Weston admits — it took weeks instead of days.

For Dan O'Brien, the director of Aucoot, that goes with the territory. "With an architect's own home, they tend to use it as a chamber for new ideas, so you start to see them testing materials and concepts." Different as every project is, he says, there are certain similarities, including the way space is deployed. "That's your telltale sign: never, ever is there wasted space, and every nook and cranny has storage."

He cites Pine House in Peckham, the architect Charles Wu's bold reworking of a Victorian terrace. Under offer at £1.65 million, it's notable for its double-height kitchen and living space but also its clever storage: the larder wrapped around the staircase, repurposing an awkward nook, and the back-to-back wardrobes that double up as walls between two bedrooms.

If architects' own homes are almost always unique, some are more unusual than others. Take the Drift in rural Suffolk, listed with Hemingway+K. The home of the architect Marcus Lee and the curator Corinna Dean, it occupies the shells of four once derelict farm buildings, including a medieval barn. Priced at £1.2 million, it offers a resolutely chintz-free take on country living — one with a guest suite in a grain silo, wild swimming in the horse pond and an alfresco dining space beneath the stripped-back bones of a Dutch barn.

How saleable these homes are is, of course, the big question. A select few, every estate agent agrees, are in a category of their own: those built or converted by hugely famous names. Often grade I or grade II listed, they're priced as collector's items, rather like works of art. Lubetkin's penthouse falls into that band, along with Housden House, an uncompromising glass-and-concrete masterpiece on the edge of Hampstead Heath, which sold for almost £3 million in 2018.

The majority may not be in that rarefied sphere, but they do still occupy a distinct place in the market. For design-lovers, at least, it's a powerful selling point: a house with a personal connection to an architect that's likely to be one of a kind. It's a niche where storytelling matters almost as much as floor space, and buyers often respond to houses on a more emotive level, drawn by the play of light, perhaps, or the lines of a cantilevered staircase. ("In the best of these houses," Hemingway observes, "very few things are standard.")

Then, of course, there are more radical designs, like the Drift or Blue House in Hackney, east London, on sale for £2.75 million. The particulars describe the latter as "a singular home", and it's hard to disagree: it's a 2D cartoon cut-out come to life, designed by the architect Sean Griffiths, with a pale blue painted façade and fibre-cement "clapboard" finish. (Beyond that, it should be noted, are four light-filled floors of live/work space, spanning 2,265 sq ft.)

Will it sell? Aucoot's O'Brien certainly thinks so. "Unique homes will always split opinion, but that's a good thing," he says. "A Blue House is niche — it won't be for everyone. But for the person that gets it? They're going to absolutely love it. Sometimes it just takes a bit more time to get in front of the right person."

And — listings permitting, of course — the buyer can always make changes, once the deeds have changed hands. How does that feel for the architect? It's something Weston has pondered, now that Peckham House is on the market. "As a practice, we like the idea that things can change, and a building can evolve and be adapted." He pauses for a moment. "Truthfully, I've never really had to confront that. I guess if we sell it, we'll find out."

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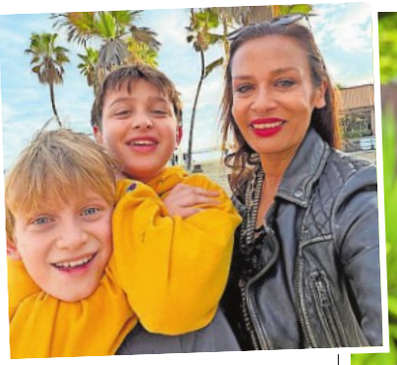
‘I’m grateful for my crippling mortgage’

When Lisa Francesca Nand was left with monthly repayments of nearly £2,800 after her divorce she had to up her income — it was the making of her

When my marriage ended in 2020, during the pandemic, there was nowhere for either of us to go, so we spent the first stretch of our separation living under the same roof through lockdown before finding separate places to rent. It wasn’t until May 2023 that I bought a place of my own — a three-bedroom 1930s semi near Poets’ Corner in Hove [*says Lisa Francesca Nand, 51, a travel writer and broadcaster*].

I’d lived in Brighton when I was younger before moving to London, and I always wanted to come back. I pinpointed five streets in Hove that would give us everything we needed — three bedrooms, a garden and a neighbourhood with a bit of soul. We’re a short walk from the beach, from independent coffee shops, restaurants and boutiques, and Hove Park is right by my boys’ school. The moment the house appeared on Rightmove I knew I had to have it. I got very excited and I told the estate agent exactly that, which is precisely what you’re not supposed to do. But I knew it would be perfect for us and thankfully my offer was accepted.

The property cost just under £600,000. I put down £200,000 and took a two-year fix at 4.5 per cent, which left me with a mortgage of almost £2,800 a month — on a single income, with two boys to support. My elder son, who’s 14, can’t always attend school because of ill health, so home is a sanctuary for him.



COURTESY OF LISA FRANCESCA NAND

Lisa Francesca Nand and her two children are settled in Hove, East Sussex

I vowed that I would make those payments somehow.

I took it on really hoping I wouldn’t be paying that much for long. I bought in the wake of the Liz Truss mini-budget, when everyone assumed interest rates would soon drift back down. They didn’t. When my fix came to an end the rate had barely moved — my payments dropped by about £100, and that was it.

Even with a career I’ve loved, people kept insisting I could earn more doing something else. But I’ve spent 20 years as a travel journalist, and what I value most is time, freedom and being able to work from anywhere. I wanted to be there for my sons.

I’m very proud of my career. I was the first female presenter on talkSPORT, and since going freelance I’ve worked across Sky, the BBC and ITV. I created and present *The Big Travel Podcast*, which was partly inspired by *Desert Island Discs* and has listeners all over the world; I’ve interviewed everyone from John Simpson to Kirsty Wark about their lives through travel. There were nights I’d finish a radio slot, do the school run, take a business call and still be working at midnight — but it was work on my terms. Giving all that up for a steadier salary felt like the wrong trade.

I tried to build another income through property. I had a flat from before I was married that I remortgaged and let out, and a second buy-to-let. But between disorganisation and what I now suspect is ADHD I missed a payment and had to take out a bridging loan to stay afloat. The fees spiralled, I lost about £40,000 and in the end I had to sell the second flat. I failed at property investing, and I don’t mind saying so. Maybe I will try it again, but who knows.

I did look at downsizing, but we need a minimum of three bedrooms and the boys really didn’t want to move. So instead I took in lodgers on and off and started looking for other work alongside journalism. I joined a travel business initially to earn commission on my own travel bookings. I now earn an active income from travel bookings and a more passive income from referral fees — about £30,000 a year. One of my agents has just booked a luxury Japanese tour costing £22,000 and I will earn £2,000 from that. My broadcast earnings have dipped to around £18,000 a year. In total, including broadcasting, rental income, a lodger, travel business and child maintenance, my income is about £70,000 a year. Having multiple income streams has allowed me to keep my home.

> “At times I’d finish a radio slot, do the school run, take a call and still be working at midnight

Travel is everything to me. Fiji has a special place in my heart because that’s where my dad is from. I grew up in Spain before we moved to Brighton when I was 16, so I have a soft spot for there too. But I’m very aware that home is full of adventure as well.

I’ve no plans to move for now. If anything, I’ll extend the kitchen and perhaps convert the loft. The mortgage that once terrified me turned out to be the push I needed to become more entrepreneurial and find different ways of working. I’m oddly grateful for it.

Interview by Annie Hayes

Rental Health

Sasha Nugara, Property Reporter

I keep getting rejected by landlords. How do I stand out?

From dodgy landlords to housemate dramas, our columnist answers your questions

Q I’m searching for a two-bedroom flat in Clapham, and with my move-out date looming I have one month left to find a place. I’ve always managed to secure a great flat by offering to pay above asking price. Now I can’t do that, and I’m finding myself being rejected from everywhere.

How can I make my application stand out to landlords without offering cash above the asking rent?

A The ban on bidding wars was my favourite clause included in the Renters’ Rights Act this year. It had become such a common practice to go straight in with an over-asking offer that I would lower my budget when looking for a flat to accommodate the inevitable extra costs.

I remember calls from letting agents actively encouraging me to raise my offer for a good chance of securing a flat, and them losing interest in me if I refused. When I did offer £50 or even £100 more a month, that didn’t appear to work. I always wondered how much more my competitors had offered for these flats — and what they did for a living.

So hallelujah for that, but I understand your pain. The relentless rejection from rental properties can become too much to bear, and if you can afford it I don’t blame you for having splashed the cash.

I asked Katinka Hill, the head of lettings at Chestertons, for her advice on standing out and securing the perfect place. “The single biggest factor is being ready to act quickly,” she says. “Although there may appear to be plenty of rental properties available, the best-value homes are still being snapped up very fast. If you see a property you like, arrange a viewing as soon as possible.”

She explains that waiting a few days to decide or shopping around can mean missing out altogether. “Preparation is equally important,” she adds. “Before you even begin your search, make sure you have all the necessary documentation ready to go. This includes photo ID, proof of income, employment and landlord references, and right to rent documents where applicable. Having everything organised means there are no unnecessary delays once you’ve found the right property. “It’s also important to respond promptly after a viewing. If you know a property is the right fit, let the agent know immediately. Landlords and agents often receive interest from multiple applicants, so a swift, clear response can make a real difference.

“Being transparent about your circumstances also helps. Be clear about your preferred move-in date and whether you have any flexibility. If you can accommodate a landlord’s preferred timeline, that may strengthen your application without any financial incentive.

“In today’s market, flexibility on your move-in date can be a decisive advantage. Landlords often favour applicants who can align with their preferred timeline, so even a short period of overlapping rent may be worthwhile if it helps you to secure the property that best meets your needs.”

Hill recommends coming across as reliable — that is most landlords’ priority when looking for a tenant.

“Demonstrating financial stability, a secure income and a strong rental history can be just as valuable. Present yourself professionally, communicate clearly and respond to requests promptly throughout the application process.

“Ultimately it’s worth remembering that every landlord has different priorities. While rent is naturally important, many are equally focused on finding tenants who will look after the property, pay on time and commit to a stable tenancy. Understanding those priorities, and showing that you’re the right person to meet them, is now one of the best ways to secure the home you want.”

Building relationships with your local letting agents and staying in regular contact with them can help. “Don’t be afraid to ask questions about market conditions, demand levels and pricing in your chosen area. Agents have first-hand insight into local market activity, so their guidance can be invaluable. Some properties may offer room for negotiation, while others will be priced competitively from the outset, making a full asking-price offer the best way to secure the property.

“Finally, in the London market there will always be a compromise needed. If two out of three boxes are ticked with a rental property, that is good.”

Got a query? Email sasha.nugara@the-times.co.uk

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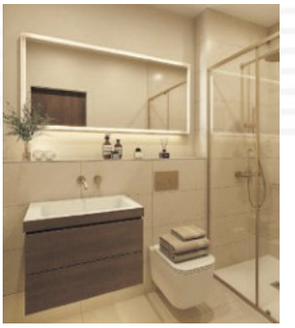

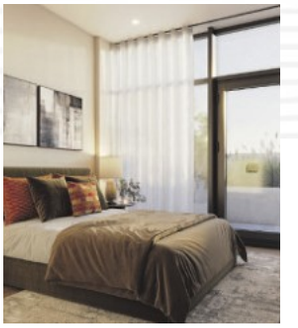

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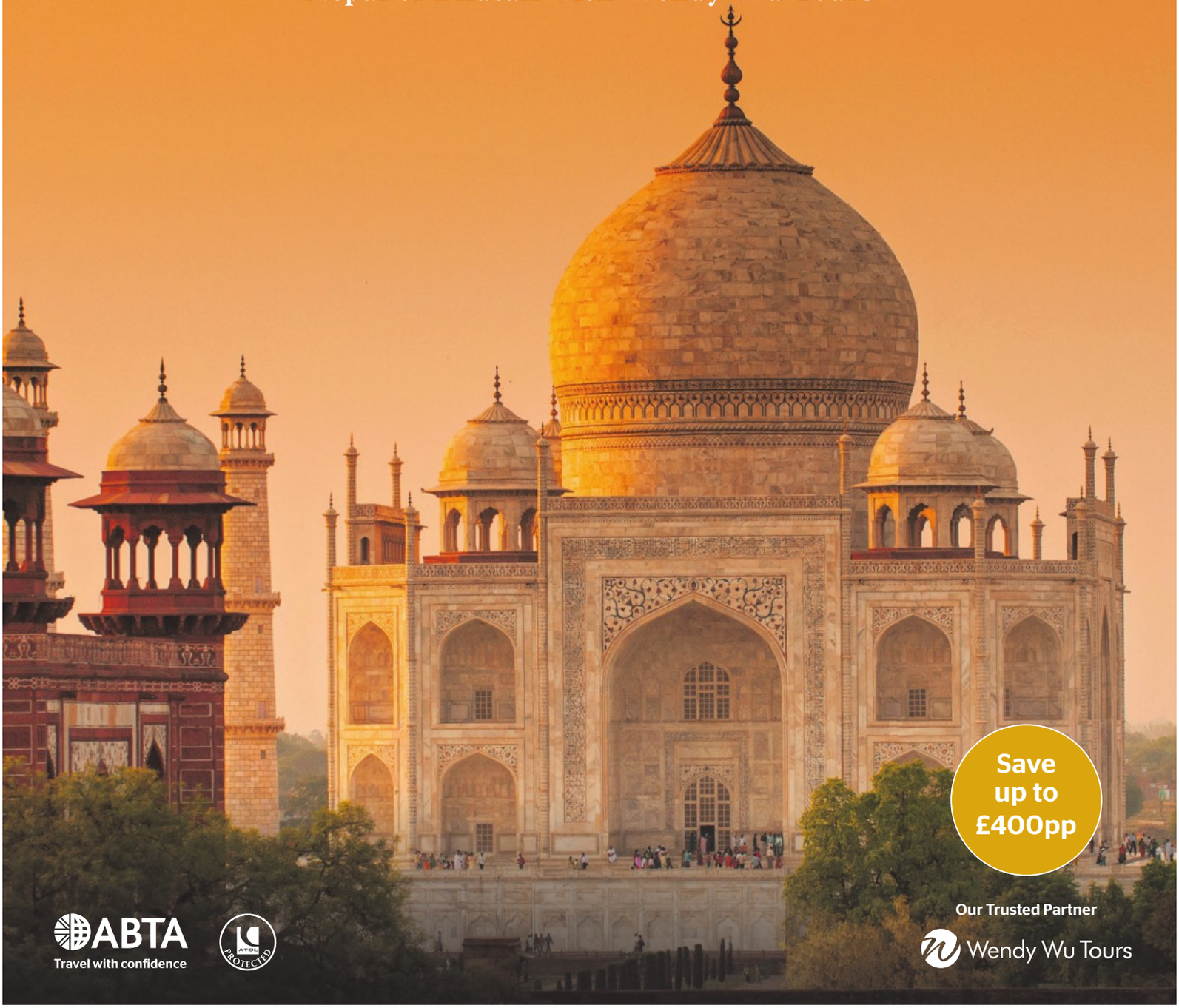

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